



LYNN ROSENBAUM AND HER PARENTS AT PHILADELPHIA'S GAY PRIDE MARCH



## Mothers and Daughters



## Leave the Buttons Up

by Lynn Rosenbaum

I officially came out to my mom as bisexual when I was 24, but I'd been talking about it for years. As my mom says, I'd left plenty of "clues" - such as lesbian magazines, gay pride pins etc. But they weren't clues in the sense that there was a secret I was trying to hide. I was just exploring my sexuality and talking about it as I went along. I've always spoken freely to my mom about my sexual relationships (or lack thereof). As a high school teacher who taught sex ed, she has always been open and open-minded about sexuality. So when I came out to her five years ago, she was not surprised.

My mom, Deena, confided in a close friend of hers whose son was gay. This friend invited Deena to attend a meeting of P-FLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays). Recently, my mom described to me this first meeting.

"I was very emotional... I was crying, for fear that your life would be difficult.... As tears are to my eyes now, it's again, [because of] a difficulty that a child might have because of their sexuality, which seems so

**Buttons** continues on page 8

## Different Daughters: A Book by Mothers of Lesbians

### A Book Review with a Story

By [REDACTED]

This is a "bi-purpose" article. Simultaneously, it is (1) a *story* of my lengthy and sometimes difficult journey toward accepting my daughter's bisexuality and (2) a *book review* of the newly revised and expanded edition of *Different Daughters* (Edited by Louise Rafkin, Cleis Press, 1996). Sarah, my only child, now 24 years old and living in California, gave me this book for Christmas. As you will see, it symbolizes a new beginning to our mother-daughter relationship and is valuable reading for any mothers and daughters struggling to understand and accept each other.

#### My Story

It all started a little over three years ago on

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### Volunteers of the Month



Alison Streit  
Debbie Helhoski  
Rosalie  
Ellyn Ruthstrom  
Debbie Block-  
Schwenk  
April Horton  
Ann Goglia  
Carla Imperial  
Janet  
Katherine  
Robyn Ochs  
Megan Jewett  
[REDACTED]  
Kathy Jenkinson

And many more  
wonderful women!  
You know who  
you are! Thank  
you, thank you,  
thank you!  
Thanks again!

BiWomen is published  
bi-monthly.

Editorial Team for this  
issue of BiWomen:

Linda Blair

Debbie Block-Schwenk

Printed on  
recycled paper

*The Boston Bisexual Women's Network is a feminist, not-for-profit collective organization whose purpose is to bring women together for support and validation. It is meant to be a safe environment in which women of all sexual self-identities, class backgrounds, racial, ethnic and religious groups, ages, abilities and disabilities are welcome. Through the vehicles of discussion, support, education, outreach, political action and social groups related to bisexuality, we are committed to the goals of full acceptance as bisexuals within the gay and lesbian community, and to full acceptance of bisexuality and the liberation of all gay people within the larger society.*

### Steering Committee Meeting January 7, 1996

Attending: Ellyn Robyn, Ann, Jean,  
Debbie

Finances: BBWN is facing the need to make a budget. Robyn brought in last year's financial statement to look at. Newsletter printing is a large expense, which Robyn has been actively trying to bring down (see below). More details in the breakdown of costs are needed, and will be brought to the next meeting.

Fundraising: BBWN is still short on funds. More fundraisers need to be planned for the spring or summer. A Valentine's dating service and an auction of goods and services were two ideas. The auction seemed a better choice; it has been very successful in the past. Organizers are needed.

House party wrap-up. The House Party in December was a great success and raised over \$300 for BBWN. Thanks go to

*Minutes continues on page 10*

## Please Get Involved!

There are currently many volunteer opportunities available with BBWN and the Bi Resource Center. Steering committee/Board member positions are available and other volunteers are needed for each group. For more info or to volunteer call the Bi Office at (617) 424-9595.

### Coming in *Bi Women*:

The Theme for the April/May issue

will be

### *Bi Travel Stories*

Help us plan our summer vacations!

DEADLINE: February 28, 1997

#### UPCOMING THEMES:

June/July: "Mixed Marriages" and Cross-Orientation Relationships. What's it like being involved with someone who's not bi (or who is if you're not)?

August/Sept.: Gender.

Share your thoughts and experiences on gender identity, gender-bending, transgenderism, etc.

Please provide submissions on paper (typed or handwritten), on disk (PC or Mac) or by e-mail (to [lindab@shore.net](mailto:lindab@shore.net) and [starfurry@worldnet.att.net](mailto:starfurry@worldnet.att.net). Please submit only *text* by e-mail. We cannot accept your art or photos electronically.) Include your name and phone number if possible.

*If you do not want your name published, please tell us.* Otherwise, we may assume that you do not mind being listed as a contributor. You may contribute anonymously, or use just your first name.

BBWN is starting a World Wide Web page. Selected articles and excerpts from articles will be published on our Web page starting this spring. *If you do not want your work published on the Web, or would like to use a different name for a piece that would appear on the Internet, please let us know.*

Send articles, calendar entries, letters, black-and-white art, news and views to:

BiWomen

P.O. Box 639

Cambridge, MA 02140

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this newsletter are copyrighted  
by the authors and artists.



# BBWN House Party a Great Success !

by Ellyn Ruthstrom

If raising money was always this easy and this much fun, more people would go into fund-raising. The BBWN Benefit House Party that was held December 14th at members [REDACTED] and Amy's home was a roaring success with people dancing into the wee hours of the morning and generously donating over \$300 to the organization.

Scrumptious food that was donated by Val Shulock and The Basil Tree catering and drinks and music that were donated by other BBWN members kept the crowd well fed and ready to dance. As advertised, black tie was optional and many of the revelers took the opportunity to display their holiday finery.

After an hour of schmoozing, the open mic entertainment began. Emceed by Deborah Levine, the open mic segment of the party revealed the hidden talents of many members that night. Several members played instruments and sang their own compositions, others shared their poetry and prose, and Meg Wright had the packed room howling with her stand-up routine about coming out to her twin sister.

A huge bi thanks go out to all those who organized, attended and contributed to the fabulous House Party. Did someone say, "Let's make this an annual event?"



THE HOUSE PARTY PLANNING COMMITTEE STRIKES A POSE (L TO R): [REDACTED] ELLYN RUTHSTROM AND DEBORAH LEVINE. THE PARTY WAS HELD AT THE HOME OF BBWN MEMBERS [REDACTED] AND AMY.



JENNIFER (L) AND HOSTESS AMY (R) RELAXING IN THE KITCHEN DURING THE HOUSE PARTY.



ANN GOGIA TAKES TO THE DANCE FLOOR AFTER STORYTELLING DURING THE HOUSE PARTY'S OPEN MIC.



Valuable Families is an organization putting out a newsletter "for everyone who supports, cherishes and respects our Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual families of origin and families of choice."

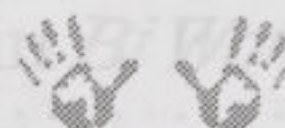
Based in Western Massachusetts, the group holds potlucks and discussion groups and provides support and networking. For more information or to get on their mailing list, contact them at Valuable Families, P.O. Box 60634, Florence, MA 01601 or send e-mail to [Valfams@crocker.com](mailto:Valfams@crocker.com).

AIDS Grove Now a National Memorial

The federal omnibus parks bill approved by Congress at the beginning of October includes a provision designating San Francisco's AIDS Memorial Grove in Golden Gate Park a national memorial. The grove, which includes about 15 acres of trees and engraved flagstones, was started by volunteers in 1989, and is supported by private donations.



## Ochs on Ochs



by Robyn Ochs

I interviewed my mother, Sonny Ochs, over the holidays. I came out to myself in 1976, but it was only several years later that I felt comfortable telling other people, including my mother, that I am bisexual. I am still unclear about why it was so hard, and thought that perhaps picking my mother's memory might be helpful. As it turns out, it seems to have been what *wasn't* said around me, more than what was said, that made it so hard for me to come out.

R: Let's start with a bit of background. Growing up in the 40's and 50's, what kind of information did you have about bisexuality or homosexuality?

S: None whatsoever.

R: None? Did you know anyone who was gay or bi?

S: I didn't know anyone, and didn't even know that it existed.

R: Presumably, by the time I came out to you, you were no longer totally ignorant. Where had you gotten your information?

S: By the time my friend Marsha came out to me, I knew that lesbians existed. She was the first I knew personally. I was surprised when I found out - she was such a good friend of mine that I didn't feel anything negative. She was one of my best friends and one of my favorite people, whom I knew so well - I thought (laughs). I was also in a women's consciousness raising group with a tremendous age range, but everyone in my group was straight. We went to this weekend where at least half of the women were lesbians. At first we were very uncomfortable and could really feel the hostility. We were shocked that they were there and could feel their hostility toward us. But then when we started talking to each other it was incredible - everyone was tell-

ing their stories. It really educated me.

R: Tell how you learned that I am bisexual.

S: Well, you came to the Clearwater (folk festival) with a stereotypic "dyke on bike." I looked at her and said to myself "Oh, no." Not because she was a lesbian or I thought you were but because she was so stereotypic - something out of a Hollywood movie. Then you told me you were sometime later. I remember I told you it didn't matter to me, I just wanted you to be happy. Whatever makes you happy was fine. I probably would have preferred you to be straight because I was afraid that straight people might treat you cruelly.

R: So how about this bisexual thing?

S: Well, what I jokingly tell my friends is that this makes it more interesting, never knowing if you're going to bring home a boy or a girl.

R: But seriously—

S: The only thing about bisexuality that is kind of frightening is that because you're dealing with people who are crossing over there's more of a risk of AIDS than if you were a total lesbian?

R: Why do you think there's a higher risk?

S: Because with lesbians, the AIDS risk is so low. If you date a male who's also been with males there's a higher risk.

R: What about safer sex?

S: Well, if you practice safer sex it's obviously not so much of a risk.

R: What do your friends think?

S: None of them seems to care. Of course, my friends are very varied and include a lot of lesbians.

R: None of your friends have ever said anything?

S: No, don't forget I have a very unusual bunch of friends. That's why they're my friends - not exactly the typical country club set.

R: How do you feel about having me be not only bi, but a very visible bi activist?

S: When I was teaching and you were in *Newsweek* I thought "Uh oh, one of the kids is going to see you. It's a small town and I wondered whether the school administration [where I taught high school in upstate New York] would be upset. But nobody ever said anything. The interesting thing is, the last time I did the debate in my classroom, seven kids chose gay rights. Six of these were pro, and the seventh was against it, but still ambivalent.

Ochs continues on page 7

### ▽ Safer Sex Study ▽

Women who have had sex with women and men at any time from 1988 to the present needed to complete *anonymous, confidential* survey of safer sex practices.



Contact Barbara Nicely, M.A.,  
P.O. Box 594, Northfield, OH 44067  
or leave message at (216) 467-6442  
(9 a.m. - 9 p.m. EST).





# Old Married Woman...or, So Are You Happy Now, Mom?



by [REDACTED]

"There you are, you old married woman!" was the greeting from a friend I hadn't seen in ages. I turn, glance over my shoulder to see who it is he's talking to, and then I remember, "Oh yeah, it's me." And I worry, am I becoming my mother?

Me, who lived for years as a not quite separatist radical lesbian, me who curled my lip at the news of yet another "het wedding" I had been invited to. Me, who had long ago left behind images of a white dress, 6 bridesmaids and dreams of "the man that I'll marry."

I have suddenly become respectable. I can have sex and it isn't illegal (except maybe a few of the more interesting positions). Friends of my parents whom I haven't seen in 20 years mailed us checks for \$25 addressed to Mr. and Mrs. (We made a deal: we tore up those envelopes, cashed the checks.)

I look down on the ring finger of my left hand and there is a gold ring. Out there for anybody to see. For anyone to make assumptions about me.

When I told my mom I was getting married, she was thrilled and we started the tug of war over what the wedding would be like. I said "No" to bridesmaids, her Lutheran Church, organ music, being "given away." Yes to a rose garden, bagpipes, women dancing a sensuous dance, a massage on my wedding day instead of having my hair done.

My partner and I tried very hard to make the ceremony our own. To make it in alignment with our values. I worried about what my mother would think.

When the day arrived and we all gathered, my

mother stared at the ground, memorizing the lines of the sidewalk as our gay male friend in pearls used the "b" word (for "bisexual") and the "l" word (for "lesbian"). You could tell in the photos that she was overcome with shame that I could have these vile words in my wedding.

She murmured afterwards, "We are so happy for you." and then privately told my sister, "I'm so glad grandma and grandpa weren't able to be there."

She also keeps repeating as if a mantra to herself at any opportunity to all who would listen, "Now our family is complete."

Now, it had been difficult going around all those years as an incomplete family. I guess having your daughter together with another woman for seven years doesn't complete your family in her book. But at last here we are. All four of her kids safely married (to the appropriate gender). Our wedding portrait to be enshrined on her living room wall.

The queer people at the wedding — the lesbians, the gay men, and the bisexuals of both genders — they felt affirmed, I think. They said so, laughing and talking a lot.

My family danced at the reception until too many women (of all orientations) were dancing too wildly, together. My family then all sat down, grouped themselves in a little cluster, huddled together. My mother talking only with people who seemed "safe." It might be catchy, you know. By this point I didn't care. I danced

**Married** continues on page 10

## Listening to Ourselves

The Massachusetts Public Health Association is presenting a series of four breakfast conversations focusing on women's health issues entitled "Listening to Ourselves: Challenging Tradition & Taking Charge." The talks will be held on Wednesday, February 12; Thursday, March 13; Wednesday, April 9th; and Wednesday, May 14th and will cover topics such as "Am I Blue? — Myths and Realities of Depression" and "Have We Come a Long Way? — Women and the Media." The cost is \$45 for the series (\$35 for MPHA members or \$20 for students) or \$15 per session (\$12 for members, \$5 for students) or \$18 at the door. For more information or to register, contact the Massachusetts Public Health Association, 305 South Street, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130, 617-524-6696.



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## Poetry Poetry Poetry...

### Untitled

when you kiss me

reality disappears

our lips meet  
our bodies sing

we are all that  
exists

laughing  
touching  
kissing  
feeling  
holding

we play each other

musical instruments  
with practiced skill

breaths coming quicker, harder

we are lost in the thrill  
of each other's bodies

\*Sappho translated by Jim Powell

and you cry out

we collapse

in each other's arms

catching our breath

we lie there  
afterglow fades

and reality crashes in at the ring of the phone.

Elie Mohns



連  
理  
館

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## ...Poetry Poetry Poetry

### Touch



enfold me

wrap your warmth 'round me  
caress  
my hair, brush  
my cheek

revel in the touch of my skin  
my softness  
warmth

touch me for hours  
know  
my body, reach  
my soul

lie with me in  
stillness  
let me feel you  
everywhere

E Grace Noonan

### Sappho Despairs

*Come to me again, and release me from this  
want past bearing.*

*All that my heart desires  
to happen — make it happen.*

*And stand beside me, goddess, my ally.*

— Sappho\*

Heedless Aphrodite, when I petitioned you,  
these solitary seabirds hopping between wave and  
sand

were nestlings, and now the bleak winter comes.

The voice I long to hear is still her voice,  
each knock rouses me lest it is

her knock. Yet, she broke no promises. But —  
Aphrodite, my faithless ally, only the gods  
can will love to start or will it to end.

The trees stand leafless in your grove  
and I am not free.

Rachel Silber

\*Sappho translated by Jim Powell





That surprised me, being that it was such a small town. Kids today are much more progressive. They assume certain teachers in the school are gay, and just state it as a matter of fact. I think that because so many people are out of the closet now, most people know they have family members who are lesbian, bi or gay. It's so common now that people are not as threatened. People used to hide the fact of lesbian gay or bisexual relationships the same way they hide mental illness. More and more people think it doesn't make any difference what you do in your bedroom. It helps in that people like Melissa Etheridge have come out. It's great.

R: What do you think it would have been like had you come out in the 50's?

S: Horrible, because it wasn't accepted at all. I would have lived in fear, and probably would have gotten fired from my job.

R: What strategies do you think are most effective in turning straight people into active advocates and allies to lesbian gay people?

S: Just approaching them as friends and making them comfortable and letting them realize that you're not a monster — just the people next door — sharing your similarities with them. It comes down to a fear of the unknown. I remember telling a student once who was afraid that a lesbian would come onto her "What would you do if a boy came onto you? You'd say 'Thanks, but no thanks.' Well you could say the same thing to a girl."

R: I'm feeling very lucky thinking of all the people who are afraid to come out to their parents because they wouldn't be able to handle it.

S: A lot of parents know but aren't willing to talk about it. I'm sure there are a lot of parents who would probably disown their kids.

R: In Gay Pride marches, people burst into tears when the P-FLAG contingent goes by.

S: They do? That's probably because their own parents aren't accepting. It would be easier for parents if they knew other people with gay kids or who are themselves gay.

R: I still hold onto the fantasy that you'll start a chapter of P-FLAG up where you live.

S: Ha ha.



## ALL BI, MYSELF

OKAY KIDS! MATCH THE DAUGHTER WITH HER MOM!

MY MOM'S BEEN A BIG SUPPORT!



UH, YOU'RE BLOWING TH' GAME MS. BONELLA

CAN I BORROW YER BLACKSWEATER TONIGHT, LULU?



YEH. WILL WE BE DONE BY 7?

MA'S GREAT. SHE'S WORKING THROUGH SOME DENIAL...



I PRAY TO GOD SHE GOES ON KEEPING THE WHOLE THING A SECRET FROM ME!



MY MOM DOESN'T SUSPECT A THING. THANK GOD!

WHAT ABOUT THAT GORGEOUS MAN IN HER FRESHMAN YEAR?!



OH RIGHT!! YOU LOST MY RED ONE PLAYING STRIP POKER



TELL ME YOU'RE NOT DATING THIS!



by Kathrine Douthit

1997



PFLAG — Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays — is a national non-profit organization dedicated to promoting the health and well-being of gay, lesbian and bisexual persons, their families and their friends through support, advocacy and education. With over 410 affiliates worldwide, PFLAG works to create a society that is healthy and respectful of human diversity.

There are many PFLAG chapters in Massachusetts (see below) and throughout the country, including the Boston office at P.O. Box 44-4, West Somerville, MA 02144. Phone: 617-547-2440. Outside Massachusetts, contact the national office at 202-638-4200 for referrals to a chapter near you, or look them up on the World Wide Web at <http://www.pflag.org> to join.

### Buttons from page 1



unfortunate in today's world. But since then, I see the emotion that people bring to P-FLAG and (that others are) much more emotional than I was or am because they have horrible horror stories - rejection and all kinds of awful things.... But since then,... I am a much different person, and I feel like I am more of a support person for people that come. And I feel that's really a good contribution. And I can say how I've changed through the years, how strong I feel about giving support and helping. I just love that organization."

Deena now regularly attends the P-FLAG monthly meetings, often joined by my father. My mom and dad marched with the P-FLAG contingent in Philadelphia's Gay Pride and invited me to join them (see photo). Most recently, they went to the P-FLAG national convention in Washington DC.

Addressing my bisexuality has created a special bond in my relationship with my mother. Deena says, "If anything, I think it brought us closer." We have not only developed a certain kind of intimacy based on my sexual orientation, but we also share a common activist interest. My mom often calls me to let me know about the latest book or article on sexual politics.

My mom is full of pride about her involvement in P-FLAG and her acceptance of me. She has a colorful strip of buttons hanging on the refrigerator door which proclaims "I'm straight but not narrow," "P-FLAG National Convention," and a big pink and purple pin that says, "I Love My Child." This display sparked a discussion when I went home to Philadelphia for Thanksgiving. We were expecting several relatives to arrive at our house, and my mom asked me if I wanted to leave the buttons up or take them down. I was grateful that she had thought to ask me and that she owned the buttons to begin with. Most of all, I was happy that she was willing to respect my decision to be "out" or not. I thought it over and decided to leave the buttons where they were. One set of cousins didn't mention them at all. The other set asked directly, and we answered directly - without much discomfort or much

discussion.

The next day my mom commented on the experience.

"About last night, and hanging all the buttons we got from P-FLAG - I was really happy to do that because I am now leaving that up. I am not taking it down. And anybody that comes in, I will answer them. Because that's one more thing of me being able to be out of the closet.... I am now "out". I'm going to be out and I feel out. And I'm OUT."



### Daughters from page 1

an unusually hot July evening in Palo Alto, California, where Sarah was working during her college summer recess. As my husband John and I sat with Sarah on a lumpy bed in a fan-less hotel room, updating her on family news, she nervously told us that she is bisexual. Although totally unprepared for and confused by Sarah's announcement, we hugged her, shed some tears, and told her she would always be loved and welcomed as our daughter.

When Sarah came out, I went in the closet, spiraling through many stages and emotions. *Shock*: She had only dated boys in high school and her first two college years. *Denial*: This was easy since she was 3000 miles away in California. *Communication Breakdown*: Conversations were uncomfortable. Email messages and phone calls between us almost stopped. *Misunderstanding*: This must be a "liberal, California phase" in her life that will surely go away when she matures and realizes she'd be better off just dating men. *Guilt*: What did I do wrong? Maybe it was that wall plaque that I gave her at age six which read "Girls Can Do Anything"! *Regret*: I guess I won't ever be a grandmother. *Anger*: How could she do this to me and my family? *Desperation*: I finally started attending PFLAG meetings. *Fledgling Confidence*: I met many other parents who have successfully and happily come to grips with their children's sexual orientation. *Attitude Adjustments*: I met, dined with, and came to appreciate Sarah's live-in female partner, Tracy. *Vocabulary Development*: My library and computer overfloweth. I never knew there were so

Daughters continues on next page

### Massachusetts PFLAG Chapters

Berkshires....413-458-3477	Framingham.. 508-562-5807
Brewster.....508-255-2180	Gardner....508-632-5186
Boston....617-547-2440	Merrimack Valley....603-898-2500
Concord.....508-562-5807	Newburyport...508-352-7028
Fitchburg.....508-632-5186	Southeast MA....508-238-6373
South Shore....617-749-7730	





## Daughters from previous page

many books, newsletters, and websites devoted to gay issues! *More Confidence*: Her father and I attended the GLBT Speaker's Bureau Training in November 1996. *Coming out*: John and I joined with Sarah in writing "coming out" letters to all our immediate family members. *Relief*: We received amazing support from family members who were quite moved by our letters. *Joy*: I made an ornament for our Christmas tree that says, "Family's First OUT Christmas, 1996". The three of us proudly hung it in a prime spot. *Understanding and Acceptance*: We can now ask Sarah questions about her sexuality, and she can answer honestly, without feeling that she is being grilled by clueless, distrusting parents. We even rent movies like *The Wedding Banquet* and laugh about and discuss the scenes that are reminiscent of our own family situation.

Sarah and I have come a long way in these last three years. I feel I love, understand, and appreciate her better than ever before. In our living room, one table has the proverbial prom photo — Sarah with long blonde hair, in a blue satin dress, dancing with her high school boyfriend Ken. Another table has a picture of this same daughter, with her former partner Tracy, on her BMW motorcycle in the wilds of Alaska, dressed in her black riding suit, with short, cropped locks. I now understand and am proud of both pictures. And that wall plaque that reads "Girls Can Do Anything" still hangs on Sarah's bedroom wall.

### The Book Review

Louise Rafkin, a Cape Cod resident, has revised and expanded her popular 1986 edition of *Different Daughters*. Included in the 29 mothers' stories, there is now a chapter by the mother of two bisexual daughters ("Bi Understanding" by Marsha Buck, page 55) as well as the courageous testimony of a mother whose daughter recently informed her that she is transsexual ("Finding my Way Through the Woods" by Margaret Smith, page 144). The mothers represent a wide range of ages, ethnic and racial backgrounds, religions, occupations, and social class, but their stories have common themes and emotions — many of which are found in my own story. These moms express fear for their offspring, struggles, despair, rejection, and guilt, but also hope, love, joy, warmth, a desire for happiness for their daughters, tremendous courage, and eventually acceptance.

Interestingly, despite the difficulties and seriousness of the situations, most mothers share some of the humor that pervades their mother-daughter relationships. Fran Salen, who wrote anonymously in the first edition, but now proudly signs her name to her chapter, writes that being in the closet is really more like being "in a locked trunk". Jane Ferguson tells of suggesting to her

lesbian daughter that she name her women-only, vegetarian restaurant "The Feminist Miss-Steak". For me, a sense of humor denotes deep understanding. Such depth exists throughout the chapters, providing comfort and support for anyone with a child whose sexual orientation is still labeled by society as "different".

### Epilogue

As I gave Sarah one last hug before she left for the airport after being home for Christmas, I noticed that she was wearing the small yellow button that I (Santa) had put in her stocking. The words on the button say: "Two roads diverged in a yellow wood ... and I took both." Watching the cab take off in the cold dark morning, feeling somewhat sad about her leaving, I reached for my copy of *Different Daughters* and reread the words Sarah had written on its inside cover page:

For you, Mom —

Reading these women's stories has given me perspective on your journey to accepting my sexuality. I think we are now taking a journey together. We can accomplish anything when we move towards each other.

Love,

Sarah

Christmas 1996: "Baby's First Out Christmas"

I will always treasure this book and hope Sarah feels the same about the button. They represent hopeful milestones on our continuing journey.



The January 1997 issue of the *Journal of Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Identity*, edited by Warren Blumenfeld, is a special edition on bisexual theory. Contributors include Biversity Boston activist Wayne Bryant and poet Michael Montgomery among many others. Usually, the journal is only available by subscription, but the publishers have agreed to opening this edition up for one-time sale. If you are not already subscribed, contact the publishers.

Inside the USA, contact Ms. Hooli R. Hellman, Plenum Publishing Corp, 233 Spring Street, New York, NY 10013, U.S.A. Refer to the 'Bisexual Theory Special Edition'. Cost: Institutions: \$34; individuals \$11.90; for full run (4 issues a year) \$35.



## Beth Israel Hospital



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CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139



## Women's Support Groups

Massachusetts Action for Women is a local group supporting and acting on women's issues including health, economic empowerment, education, and political empowerment. For more information, contact them at Massachusetts Action for Women, c/o Coventures, 250 Summer Street, Boston, MA 02210.

In the fall of 1996, the Fenway Community Health Center began offering a support group for "lesbians with cancer". For more information, contact Ann at 617-267-0900 x 302.

## Marriage from page 5



with the wimmin.

We all went home early. It was time. My mother didn't say good night, but just got in the car, her disapproval ringing loudly in my ears.

We were now married.

We didn't actually have "married sex" until several days later when we finally caught up on our sleep. Then it was nice, but I also had so many things playing around in my head that I couldn't be very present, very hot, very excited. I couldn't stop thinking about my mother.

Weeks later, while looking through photos, my mother commented several times, "The wedding was nice. The flowers were pretty. You sure had good weather." That was all. All she could bring herself to say. At least to me. She told my sister she was afraid she would lose all her friends who attended. (The ones she insisted be invited!) So far, I guess they just haven't talked about it.

I always thought if I were with men, my mother would be happy. And I surely thought that if I were legally married, she would finally approve. It turns out that neither one of those made as much difference as I would have thought. She still doesn't understand me or my life.

Old married lady. Yeah I guess. Lesbian friends insist on referring to my husband instead of my partner. I now own a formal tablecloth with 16 matching cloth napkins and a number of assorted useful small appliances.

People keep asking me if it feels any different. Sometimes I answer "I'm not sure. I'm still getting used to it. I guess so. Yes, the wedding was very nice. We had really good weather. My mother didn't like it. She still doesn't understand me."

Are you happy now, Mom?



**BETH DAMSKY, MSW, LICSW**

**Psychotherapy and Consultation**

50 Dudley Street  
Cambridge, MA 02140  
617.497.6581

## Minutes from page 2

the organizers and hosts, Deborah, Ellyn, Ananda and Amy, and to Val for her generous food donation.

Newsletter prices: In response to Robyn's e-mail, Cecilia Tan offered a lead on much cheaper printing costs. The newsletter editors will contact this printer and if all goes well we will have switched for the Feb./March issue. Cecilia will get a free ad in BiWomen to show our appreciation.

New newsletter themes were determined for the next three issues — "Bi Travel Stories," "Mixed Marriages" — Cross-identity relationships" and "Gender/Gender Bending" will be the next three topics.

Regional Gathering: BBWN is planning a spring or summer regional event to draw in bi women from the greater New England area. June is the probable date. The fundraising auction could be part of the social activities. Organizers to help with this event are also needed.

Divas: Ann is looking for help with the Intro Meetings. Concern was expressed that some of the other divas would do better with help from people more connected to the network. Deborah Levine is looking for a new mailing diva and Jean volunteered.

Bi Rap: The Bi Rap at the Women's Center is currently down to once a month. It is important to support it so that it has a steady base and can grow again.

Web Page: BBWN has a couple of options for free web space. Debbie will put the page together. Older newsletter articles will be on-line as well as some short "teasers" to entice people to subscribe

T-Shirts. Prices for T-shirts from the last company we used were obtained. Printing even a moderate number of shirts is quite expensive and it would be difficult for BBWN to front the cost at this point. A co-venture with Biversity was a possibility; Ann will mention it to them.

Next meeting: Wednesday, February 19th at 7 PM at the Boston Living Center.

Deborah Block-Schwenk





## CALENDAR *continued from page 12*

### February 28 ♦ Friday

**Dance Friday, 8:45 p.m.** A bi-friendly alternative to the club scene. Freestyle dancing to diverse taped music in a casual, smoke-free, alcohol-free atmosphere. Wear comfortable clothes. People of all genders and ages (including children) welcome. \$5.00. Meet outside at 23 Main Street in Watertown Square. Free parking in the lot behind the CVS. On bus routes 52,57,59,64,70,71. Info: Ann at (617) 923-8716.

### March 2 ♦ Sunday

**BiSpace, 7 p.m.** First hour's topic: "Bi and trans common issues" (See February 2nd).

### March 4 ♦ Tuesday

**Spare Change and Ice Cream Party.** Grab that jar of coins from your dresser and join us at Robyn's in Central Square, Cambridge. We'll roll 'em up, turn 'em into cash to help fund future bi events and treat ourselves to ice cream and frozen yogurt with all the fixin's while we're at it. Call Robyn at (617) 576-1066 for directions.



### March 8 ♦ Saturday

**Spring Soiree for bi and lesbian women with disabilities or chronic illness and their friends.** 7:30 p.m. at Havurat Shalom, 113 College Ave., Somerville. Munchies, games, and general grooviness. Wheelchair accessible, MCS safer-space, ASL interpreters on request. Able bodied women are encouraged to attend. *This is a fragrance free event.* Please do not wear perfume or any scented hair or body products. The sponsors also regretfully request no assistance animals attend. Info: Cambridge/Somerville Les/Bi CFIDS Support Group at (617) 666-6623; TTY users:



### BiWomen Subscription Form

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE (Optional) \_\_\_\_\_

☐ New subscriber ☐ Renewal

SUBSCRIPTION RATE (sliding scale)

☐ \$0-\$20 (pay what you can)

☐ \$20-\$30 (suggested)

☐ \$30-\$100

THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

BBWN

P.O. BOX 639

Cambridge, MA 02140

(617) 628-2492.

### March 12 ♦ Wednesday

**BBWN Introductory Meeting.** A safe space for women to connect with the bisexual community. 7:30 p.m.- 9 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., (Central Sq.), Cambridge. Info: (617) 354-8807.

**BRC Board Meeting 7-9 p.m.** at the Bi Office. The Bisexual Resource Center educates the public on bisexuality and bi issues. All bi and bi-friendly people are welcome to come help plan and organize this work.

### March 14 ♦ Friday

**Bi Coffeehouse, 7:30 p.m.** at The Casual Cup, 1362 Beacon Street, Brookline. A great place to meet and greet. \$5 cover charge, helps pay the musician(s) who will perform and includes \$1.50 toward the cost of your first beverage. Nearest T stop is Coolidge Corner on the C branch of the Green Line.

### March 15 ♦ Saturday

**Biversity Brunch, 11:00 a.m.** at Ann's Cafeteria, 250 Huntington Ave. (near Mass. Ave.) in Boston. Low atmosphere, but good Greek and American food. Nearest T stop is Symphony, on the E branch of the Green Line.

### March 18 ♦ Tuesday

**Coming Out as Bisexual.** 7-9 p.m. (see February 5th)

**Bi Women's Rap, 7:30 p.m.** at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St, Cambridge. Call (617) 354-8807 for discussion topic or other info.

### March 22 ♦ Saturday

**BBWN Potluck Brunch** at noon. Pack up or pick up something good to eat or drink and get yourself over to Ellyn's in Davis Square, Somerville to spend a afternoon in the company of other cool women. Call Ellyn at (617)629-2727 for directions. All women welcome.

### March 25 ♦ Tuesday

**BiWomen newsletter stuffing** volunteer night. Come see your friends, make new ones and put your hands to work for the community. 7-9 p.m. at the Bi Office.

### March 27 ♦ Thursday

**Book Signing.** Our own Boston bi community's Wayne Bryant will be autographing copies of his long-awaited book *Bisexual Characters in Film: from Anais to Zee*. Books will be available for purchase in case you haven't gotten yours yet. The signing will take place at the Boston Living Center (home of the Bi office) at 29 Stanhope Street in Boston. Nearest T stop is Back Bay on the Orange Line.



### March 30 ♦ Sunday

**Biversity Brunch.** 1:00 p.m. Mucho Gusto is the latest addition to the bi brunch lineup. Cuban food and a bi-friendly atmosphere. 1174 Boylston Street (near Mass. Ave.). Nearest T stop is Auditorium on the Green Line.

## SUBMIT!!

TO BI WOMEN!

This is *your* newsletter and we *need* your stories. Articles on any topic are welcome!

Letters, poems, black-and-white artwork, doodles, jokes, experiences, ideas....

See page two for submission guidelines, or leave a message at the office for anyone on the Editorial Team.

**BBWN is looking for a few good women to host potluck brunches for the months of April and May. For more info, call Debbie at (617) 731-9060 or email her at starfurry@worldnet.att.net.**

## Advertise in BiWomen!

For only \$15 per issue, your message will reach over 700 subscribers. Save \$5 and advertise in three issues for \$40.

Send a business-card sized ad or **personal ad** (50 words or less) and a check (to BBWN) to:

**BiWomen, c/o BBWN, P.O. Box 639, Cambridge, MA 02140**



## The "Bi Office"

is the Bisexual Resource Center, located at 29-33 Stanhope Street, behind Club Cafe' and right next door to Bertucci's. For info call (617) 424-9595.

## Ongoing Events

### 3rd Tuesdays:

**Bi Women's Rap**, 7:30 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St, Cambridge. For info and discussion topics call (617) 354-8807.

### Wednesdays:

**Say It, Sister!** radio show on WMBR 88.1 FM (first on your FM dial!). 7:30-8:30pm. Info and topics: (617) 253-8810.

### 3rd Thursdays:

**GLBisexual Speakers Bureau Meeting**, 8pm, at the Boston Living Center, 29-33 Stanhope Street, Boston (in the same building as the bi office). Wheelchair accessible. General meeting at 6:45pm with the theme program starting at 8pm. Info: (617) 354-0133.

### Saturdays:

**Lavender Country Dance Group**, 8-11pm, beginners lesson 7:30. Smoke- and alcohol-free. Open to all gays, lesbians, bisexuals and their friends. First Church of Jamaica Plain, corner Centre and Eliot Sts., JP. On MBTA Green and Orange lines. \$5. Info: Janet, (617) 522-2216.

# CALENDAR

## February 2 ♦ Sunday

**Bi Space**, 7-9 p.m. at the Bi Office. A friendly discussion space to meet other bisexuals and talk about bisexual issues. First hour's topic: "Read any good bi books lately?" A \$2 donation is requested to help pay for the meeting space.

## February 5 ♦ Wednesday

**Coming Out as Bisexual**. An informal support group for people who think they may be bisexual or attracted to more than one gender. 7-9 p.m. at the Bi Office. A small donation is requested to help pay for the space. Sponsored by the Bisexual Resource Center. Info (617) 424-9595.

## February 8 ♦ Saturday

**3rd Annual Bi Ball Valentine's Day Dance** co-sponsored by Biversity Boston and Swingtime. Dance lesson from 8-9 p.m. Dancing begins at 9 p.m. Ballet Etc., 185 Corey Rd., (corner of Corey and Westbourne Terrace) Brookline.

Nearest T stops are the Washington stops on both the B and C branches of the Green line. Admission is \$6 - \$10 sliding scale. Info: (617) 522-8504.



## February 9 ♦ Sunday

**BBWN Potluck Brunch** at noon. We had so much fun there in December, we told Robyn we just had to come back again for another fabulous afternoon of eating and schmoozing. Call Robyn at (617) 576-1066 or email her at ochs@world.std.com for directions to her home near Central Sq., Cambridge. All women welcome.

## February 12 ♦ Wednesday

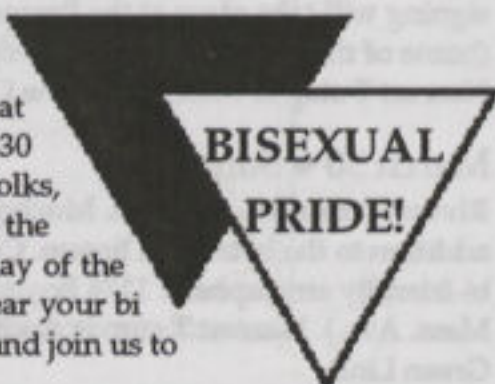
**Bisexual Resource Center Board Meeting**, 7-9 p.m. at the Bi Office. The board meets monthly to plan the many educational programs of the BRC, including the upcoming 1998 International Conference on Bisexuality in Boston next summer. All bi and bi-friendly people are welcome and encouraged to participate.

## February 15 ♦ Saturday

**Biversity Brunch**, 11 a.m. at the ever-popular Johnny D's on Holland St. in Davis Square in Somerville. The Davis stop on the Red Line is just across the street.

## February 14 Friday

**Bi Visibility Day** at the Casual Cup, 7:30 p.m. That's right folks, Valentine's Day is the official visibility day of the community, so wear your bi buttons and pins and join us to



celebrate the day as a visible bi group at the bi-owned and operated Casual Cup coffeehouse, 1362 Beacon Street, Brookline. \$5 cover charge includes \$1.50 toward the cost of a beverage and hours of live acoustic music. Nearest T stop is Coolidge Corner, on the C branch of the Green Line.

## February 18 ♦ Tuesday

**Coming Out as Bisexual**, 7-9 p.m. (see Feb. 5th)

**Bi Women's Rap**, 7:30 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St, Cambridge. Tonight's topic is "Bi Life in Boston." Please come and share what you like the most about the local scene, hear others' thoughts and meet new friends. Info: (617) 354-8807.

**Little Toys on the Big Screen**. Grand Opening presents this collection of amateur and commercially made video clips that highlight what can be done with sex toys. 7 p.m. at the Coolidge Corner Theater, 290 Harvard Street in Brookline. Nearest T stop is Coolidge Corner, on the C branch of the Green Line. Tickets are \$8.

## February 19 ♦ Wednesday

**BBWN Planning Meeting**. Spring is just around the corner and we want to be ready for it. Among other ideas on the table will be organizing a regional conference/social event for bi and bi-friendly women. We need your ideas and help, so please join us. 7-9 p.m. at the Bi Office. All women welcome.

## February 21 - 23 ♦ Friday - Sunday

**1997 Winter Gender-Free Dance Camp** of the Lavender Country and Folk Dancers in Becket, MA. Open to all lesbians, gays, bisexuals and their friends. Contradancing, folk dancing and other activities. \$160 non-members/\$140 members. Work exchange avail. Info: Robin at (508) 544-8447 or Greg at grrice@aol.com.

## February 23 ♦ Sunday

**Biversity Brunch**, 1:00 p.m. Big bowls of delicious noodle soups and dishes from Japan, Korea, China, Vietnam, and Thailand are the specialty at Ma Soba. Corner of Dunster and Mt. Auburn Streets in Harvard Square, Cambridge. Nearest T stop is Harvard on the Red Line.

## February 28 ♦ Friday

**BiWomen submission deadline**. The April/May issue's theme is "Bi Travel Stories". Been anywhere fun lately (or long ago)? Let us know where you've been that felt especially bi-friendly, or share with us your travel stories and adventures. Help us plan our summer vacations. Send articles, calendar entries, essays, poems, art, ads, book or movie reviews to: BiWomen, BBWN, P.O. Box 639, Cambridge, MA 02140. To submit text only by email, please send your article to both lindab@shore.net and starfurry@worldnet.att.net.

**CALENDAR** continues on page 11



# Bi Women

The Newsletter of the Boston Bisexual Women's Network

April/May 1997

Vol. 15 No. 2



## Travel



### Retreat to the Carribean

by Lisa Sheehy

In the first light, both of us wake to a downpour drumming on the roof. I love these sudden tropical rains that come and go so abruptly. We listen for a moment and then we slip out from under the gauzy mosquito netting to tiptoe down to the patio.

We dance and spin in the rain and as the little storm ends in the growing light, we look for the rainbow that we know must be there, and find it. Its arc spans a fertile hillside bright with gold and crimson hibiscus and vines of bougainvillea. All is quiet — no traffic noise, just a dog barking across the valley. Here at New Dawn, no one else is up yet. After a while, we go back up to sleep and read until breakfast. We've been here for a few days and a feeling of health, vigor, and relaxation has reached the marrow of my bones.

That is one of my favorite memories of a week spent at New Dawn, a Caribbean Retreat and Guest House on the small unspoiled island of Vieques, a small island off the east coast of the main island in Puerto Rico. I went there last November with several members of Boston's bi community and some other friends. New Dawn is owned and lovingly operated by Gail Burchard, a feminist innkeeper, outdoorswoman, and music lover. During its early years, Gail ran New Dawn as a women's retreat. In fact, the comfortable main house is the handiwork of women participating in carpentry courses in 86 and 87. Now, it is a beautiful and welcoming place for women, men, and children.

The guest house has plenty of comfortable common spaces, merging the inside and outdoors. The

**Carribean** continues on page 6

### Excerpts from a Travel Journal

by Carla Imperial

March 6th, 1992

Tikal, Guatemala....riding back from the Mayan ruins was a trip. We rented a little car and driver with other backpackers to save money. We rode through major bumpy dirt roads and jungle in this very small car. Tom was on one side, this Italian woman named Viria on my right. We met her going into the ruins. She was fascinating, and I was hoping that she'd want to hang with Tom and I, but she seemed to want to be on her own. We ran into her on the rocks later, as she sat and sketched one of the carvings in the stone. She smiled at me....ahhhh. There I go again. Love in the third world.

Tom and I pitched our very small tent in the jungle last night and because sleeping quarters were tight, we huddled closely before getting up at 4:00 am to catch the sunrise on the top of the pyramid. The sexual tension in the tent was intense....but, then, that's nothing new between Tom and I.

Anyway, back to Viria. I was psyched when she showed up to catch a ride with us. Our car hit a huge pothole in the road and she slammed into me. Her hand grabbed my knee to steady herself. After the road smoothed out, her hand remained on my knee. I covered it with my jacket so that Tom wouldn't see. Then, we were back in town, and she was off like a heartbeat. Not even a smile good-bye. 'Sup with that?

**Journal** continues on page 4

#### ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

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More Travel....4,7

More Mothers and Daughters.....8,9

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### Volunteers of the Month



Jean M.  
Rosalie  
Ellyn Ruthstrom  
Debbie Block-  
Schwenk  
Deborah Levine  
Ann Goglia  
Claire  
Janet  
Linda Blair  
Megan Jewett

*And many more  
wonderful  
women! You  
know who you  
are! Thank you,  
thank you, thank  
you!*

Thanks again!

BiWomen is published  
bi-monthly.

Editorial Team for this  
issue of BiWomen:

Lynne Levine

Debbie Block-Schwenk

Printed on  
recycled paper

*The Boston Bisexual Women's Network is a feminist, not-for-profit collective organization whose purpose is to bring women together for support and validation. It is meant to be a safe environment in which women of all sexual self-identities, class backgrounds, racial, ethnic and religious groups, ages, abilities and disabilities are welcome. Through the vehicles of discussion, support, education, outreach, political action and social groups related to bisexuality, we are committed to the goals of full acceptance as bisexuals within the gay and lesbian community, and to full acceptance of bisexuality and the liberation of all gay people within the larger society.*

### Steering Committee Meeting March 12, 1997

Attendees: Robyn, Rosalie, Ellyn, Debbie

First item was the budget. Ellyn had analyzed the last year's expenses. We decided to advertise more widely the availability of buttons for sale, which are a good money-maker. The new printer is working out well and will save us a substantial amount of money over the course of the year. We spoke about postage costs as well; Ellyn will now write the figures into a budgetary format for the next meeting.

Next the summer regional "shindig" was discussed. Everyone agrees this is a good idea, but organizers are needed. A planning meeting will be held after the April brunch. The event will combine socializing, community-building, and a possible BBWN fund raiser.

Ann would like people to help lead the intro meetings at the women's center. This is a great way to help introduce women to the community.

Minutes continues on page 10

## Please Get Involved!

There are currently **many** volunteer opportunities available with BBWN and the Bi Resource Center. Steering committee/Board member positions are available and other volunteers are needed for each group. For more info or to volunteer call the Bi Office at (617) 424-9595.

### Coming in *Bi Women*:

The Theme for the June/July issue

will be

### "Mixed Marriages" & Cross-Orientation Relationships

Describe your experiences in  
relationships with people who are not  
bisexual.

DEADLINE: May 2, 1997

#### UPCOMING THEMES:

August/Sept.: Gender.

Share your thoughts and experiences on  
gender identity, gender-bending,  
transgenderism, etc.

Please provide submissions on paper  
(typed or handwritten), on disk (PC or  
Mac) or by e-mail (to [lindab@shore.net](mailto:lindab@shore.net) and  
[starfurry@worldnet.att.net](mailto:starfurry@worldnet.att.net). Please submit  
only *text* by e-mail. We cannot accept your  
art or photos electronically.) Include your  
name and phone number if possible.

*If you do not want your name published,  
please tell us.* Otherwise, we may assume  
that you do not mind being listed as a  
contributor. You may contribute  
anonymously, or use just your first name.

BBWN is starting a World Wide Web page.  
Selected articles and excerpts from articles  
will be published on our Web page starting  
this spring. *If you do not want your work  
published on the Web, or would like to use  
a different name for a piece that would  
appear on the Internet, please let us know.*

Send articles, calendar entries, letters,  
black-and-white art, news and views to:

BiWomen

P.O. Box 639

Cambridge, MA 02140

All articles and art appearing in  
this newsletter are copyrighted  
by the authors and artists.





## LETTERS

Dear Bi Women:

I just received my fifth copy of your newsletter, the Erotica Issue. My reaction to it is a very strong, negative one. While I welcome books, discussions, and newsletters that explore sexuality in a tasteful way, I do not welcome pornography into my home. The latest issue of Bi Women felt like pornography to me. I can only go on my gut instinct when it comes to things like this. I consider myself open-minded politically, socially and sexually. I seek out literature and commentary that challenges my mind, experiences, and opinions. This issue felt like cold water in my face. The more I read, the worse I felt. It did not take me long to stop reading.

Who thought the phone sex article needed to be that graphic? Could Candy have let me know about her job without actually subjecting me to a free call? That is erotica? No, that is actually phone sex, usually exchanged between a man willing to pay a lot of money, and a woman willing to participate for money, also known as a form of prostitution. I am interested in why Candy does what she does. I am interested in how it makes her feel, how it affects her own sex life, etc. I do not want to be a "fly on the wall", also known as voyeurism to her calls.

This is not the first time I was offended by the newsletter. Some of the poetry has also felt like blatant x-rated prose.

There is a fine line between erotica and pornography, and this newsletter does not seem to know where to draw it. While I welcome freedom of speech, I no longer trust Bi Women's boundaries to be any where near mine, and for that reason I ask that you cancel my subscription.

Sincerely,

Jessica Balaban



*The Editor responds:*

*First, I want to thank Jessica for writing and expressing her opinion. Please be assured that the editorial team is always willing to accept comments about this newsletter and its contents. We strive to not censor anyone. Nor do we want anyone to feel unwelcome or uncomfortable. When it comes to issues of sexual expression and sexual practice, however, that is sometimes a difficult, perhaps even an impossible, goal.*

*Second, this newsletter is what you, the readers and contributors, make it. The editorial staff is all volunteer; we have very limited time to solicit articles or demand rewrites. So please contribute!! If you feel a topic has not been covered adequately, write the article you wish you'd seen. If you have a theme for an issue, please write or call with your ideas. If you would like to get involved in the editorial process, let us know—your input and help are welcome!*

*Letters to the Editor as well as articles help us keep track of how we are doing in providing the community a voice. Don't hesitate to write.*

Yours,

Debbie Block-Schwenk

### Volunteers Needed

The Women's Counseling and Resource Center, a volunteer collective of feminist therapists providing services for low and no income women, is seeking volunteer therapists. Must have a master's degree, experience, and a commitment to feminist perspectives. Please be available 2-4 hours a week and for one monthly collective meeting which includes discussion of relevant papers. They are located in the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant Street, Cambridge MA 02139, phone (617) 492-8568.

617-393-9579  
1310 Broadway, Suite 201  
Somerville, MA 02144

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A.L.A.C.E.

ASSOCIATION OF LABOR ASSISTANTS & CHILDBIRTH EDUCATORS  
PO Box 382724 • CAMBRIDGE, MA 02238 • (617) 441-2500



#### Queer Travel Ideas:

Thinking about spring and summer trips to Provincetown? Check out the Provincetown web page at <http://www.provincetown.com>.

Hawaii's 1997 Pride Parade is set for June 28, 1997.

Pridefest Philadelphia, a five-day festival including workshops, parties, athletic competitions, and other events, will take place from Wed., May 7 to Sunday May 11, 1997. For more information, call 215-732-FEST.



#### Top Gay Travel Destinations

*Island Lifestyle* magazine in Hawaii polled thirty travel agents who belong to the International Gay Travel Association for their December 1996 issue. Their conclusions for the most popular travel destinations for gay men and lesbians for 1996 (in alphabetical order): Australia, France, Hawaii, Key West, London, Miami, Palm Springs, Provincetown, Puerto Vallarta and San Francisco.

## Aloha from the Garden Isle - Kauai

Hello Bi Women,

After leaving my computer industry/bi activist life in Boston I am now happily settled on Kauai. My laid back life in Hawaii has been very sweet. The surrounding beauty fills my soul daily and the women's community here has been very supportive. I know a few other bisexuals (mostly women) and many vibrant, independent, entrepreneurial women of all sexual orientations. The healing energy on this island is very strong and many people come here to become refreshed and renewed.

I recently opened my home on the beach as a women's guest house with very affordable rates. I have a bunk room which sleeps four (\$20/night; \$125/week) and a private room for singles or couples (\$40/night; \$250/week). There's a shared kitchen and bath and a large common space where I host pot luck dinners and brunches so my guests can meet the "kama'ainas". Centrally located in Kapa'a, my home is convenient to shops and restaurants and all the beautiful sights which make Kauai so special. Snorkeling, hiking, kayaking or just plain relaxing on a tropical beach are all within reach.

Mahina, the Hawaiian goddess of the moon, watches over this beautiful place. Night skies are filled with stars and sunrise beach walks are just outside my door. If Hawaii has been on your list, but you just haven't gotten around to it, come on over. The water's great. The sun is shining. The whales and dolphins await you. Let the magic begin.

*Sharon Gonsalves*

*(808) 823-9364*

*Kapaa, Kauai, HI*



### Mahina's

a women's guest house  
on the Garden Isle - KAUAI  
Dorm or private room. Affordable rates.

Shared kitchen  
and bath  
great location

Proprietor: Sharon Gonsalves

4433 Panihi Rd.  
Kapaa, HI 96746  
(808) 823-9364

#### Journal from page 1

##### Two weeks later....

Guatemala City...my last night in Central America. Tom and I were told of a place to stay in the city called Pension Maza where the spirits flow and anything goes. We got a room for \$3.00 that was painted all black, except for a small mural in the middle of the wall. We were about to head out for one last dinner together before I headed back to the states and he stayed on to travel some more.

As we left our room, we walked through a courtyard in which several travelers were hanging out. We decided to stop for one beer. We never made it to dinner. We were drinking big liters of beer, some other stuff was being passed around. I was engrossed in conversation with a German guy named Jack (or so I remember). Tom was across the room from me talking to some chick. I caught him looking over every once in a while. Then I heard her voice. I turned and saw Viria coming out of a room. I think I physically lost my breath for a second. She was wearing a sleeveless shirt and had immense tattoos down her arms, and I wondered why I hadn't noticed them before. She saw me and came straight over.

"My American girl," she said and took my hand. Tom came over to say hello, and we all hugged as if we were old friends. She seemed to know everyone there.

This is where it gets fuzzy. The spirits were definitely flowing. All I remember was contemplating how to spend my last night with Tom, while sitting on the lap of Jack. Viria was showing off her tattoos. She had a snake running from her stomach, winding up her back. Tom and Jack were begging to see her other tattoos. She grabbed my hand and said, "We have girl things to talk about", and led me to her room. I said, trying to be in full control, "Where are you taking me?" She said, "Don't you want to see my tattoo?" ...

The next morning Tom took me and my hangover to the airport. We didn't discuss the tales of the night before, and I didn't see Viria again.

**Journal continues on next page**





## Journal from previous page

Three months later, I got a postcard from her. She wrote, "Time runs above the life. It takes the colors of memories off that remain faded and inanimate. Pension Maza I will remember well. My motorcycle is wonderful! I'm on the road! Fantastic sensations. I go on, taking everything, looking for new things to love. Ciao..."

To this day I don't remember how she got my address.

October 21, 1992

Ubud, Indonesia.....first day, wonderful.

Second day in Ubud....exquisite. I feel grateful tonight. Grateful that things are working out real lovely here in Bali. Lovely. All these Aussies around me are affecting me. Brilliant. Lovely. Today I sat on the porch of my \$5.00/night room. An incredible cottage called Happy II in the middle of this beautiful rice field, with a brilliant sunset on a lush green backdrop. I'm relaxed. I mean, really relaxed. Not uptight about being alone, bugs biting, or darkness setting. Just lovely. Made some friends...Laraine, from Australia, with her two daughters. I like them. Laraine is searching for something and we've connected in a strange way. We had a great dinner of spring rolls and satay, bottles of Bitang beer, and then hung out on our porch, played guitar, and taught the girls the words to "Closer to Fine". Indigo Girls rock in Bali!

Third day....traditional Balinese dance in Tome, called a cecek dance. Met up with Annette from Holland and Michael from America. Went back to Nick's, down the road from Happy II for our usual satay and Bitang. Hung out all night with everyone on the porch of Happy II.....where I'm definitely happy.

Fourth day.....rented bikes with Laraine and her kids and Annette for a 20 km trek around Ubud, stopping at temples along the way.

Fifth day....Walked to the Saya Rice terraces with just Laraine and the kids. We had a good talk, and I kind of came out to her. Kind of. There was a sadness in her eyes when I talked about needing to be true to myself. Met up with the others for a duck dinner. Pigged out. Booze and desert. Rice wine shots. And a great game of poker. I cleaned out with a big win of 1,500 rupiah....a whopping 75 cents!

Seventh day....planning on staying for awhile in Ubud. It feels good here.

Eighth day....highs and lows, that's what this trip is about. Woke up this morning to find that Laraine's leaving. Who said that you can't become attached while you're traveling? Crash-n-burn, man...my heart is aching.



It's harder when you're not the one passing through....

September 7, 1994

Madrid, Spain....Abroad or a broad. Neither one can I comprehend right now.

August 17, 1996

Quito, Ecuador....this is the first time that Megan and I are traveling as a couple in a third world country. Trying to find a balance between being ourselves and being careful.

Moved into our new digs, Residential Marsella, which is full of travelers. Had a meal with another American, some Germans, and two British women. Later, the American woman ended up going on a trek in the Andes with us. She admitted that she knew we were a couple the first time we entered the room. She, too, is bisexual, but it took awhile getting to the comfort zone before she told us that. As much as it doesn't play a huge part in traveling around the world, it is vastly refreshing to be able to be completely out to people you meet on the road.

August 27, 1996

Banos, Ecuador....Megan and I decided to try to make it down to see the Ingapirca ruins (old Inca ruins) in a day. Estimated a three hour drive via local bus. Took a bus to Riobamba, and then to Alausi. We had traveled three hours already and figured that we were close to our destination. We hitched a ride with what we thought was a public bus heading to Cuenca. Instead, it was a tour bus of Ecuadorians, led by a group of entrepreneurial Ecuadorians who quickly made us the center of attention on the bus. What we

Journal continues on page 6

## Queer Travel Magazines

There are two periodicals available dealing specifically with gay and lesbian travel. *Out & About* is a 16-page newsletter which accepts no advertising and includes stories and news about both pro-gay and anti-gay companies. *Out & About* appears 10 times per year; check your local gay bookstores or call 1-800-929-2268.

*Our World*, more your typical travel magazine with photographs and advertising, also comes out 10 times per year. They can be reached at 904-441-5367, or check out their web page at <http://www.rainbowmall.com/igta/ourworld>.



## Net News

The Australian Bisexual Network has a new web page and e-mail address. Check out their home page at <http://www.rainbow.net.au/~ausbinet/> or contact them electronically at [ausbinet@rainbow.net.au](mailto:ausbinet@rainbow.net.au).

*Options*, Rhode Island's Gay and Lesbian Newsmagazine, now has a web page at <http://members.aol.com/gayoptions/>

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Transgender retreats and B&B

Kindred Spirits sponsors retreats and workshops for transgendered individuals throughout the year. A retreat entitled "Dilemmas of Bisexuality" is scheduled for June 27-29, 1997. They've also recently acquired a Bed and Breakfast, open year-round, including six special weekend mini-retreats. For more information contact Kindred Spirits, P.O. Box 18332, Asheville, NC 28814. Phone 704-253-9882.



### Journal from page 5

thought was a 20-minute ride to the access road to the ruins, turned into a grueling three hour trip of being the entertainment for the bus load. They conversed to us in rapid Spanish, and laughed at our Spanish. Within minutes, the guides of the group were trying to hook us up with their eldest sons.

First they asked Megan, "Are you married?" Megan answered, all in Spanish mind you, "I have a boyfriend."

"What's his name?"

"Umm....Carlos."

"And you?" they asked me.

"I am engaged," I said, "to Miguel."


They proceeded to ask all these questions about our boyfriends, what they did, why they weren't with us, etc. Megan said that her boyfriend worked with computers. I said that mine was in school. At one point, the guide asked us if we trusted our boyfriends being alone. I replied, "Well, I feel as if he's here with me now."

"How do you know that he's not cheating on you?"

"Oh, I'm quite sure."

Megan and I rolled our eyes at each other. I wondered if any of them had any clue that Megan and I were a couple. It was a long trip. Eight hours later we were at the ruins, able to catch a half an hour of daylight. This day bit the big one.

### March 3rd, 1997

Cambridge, MA.....Megan and I are sitting here on our living room floor, surrounded by maps and guidebooks of Africa, planning our next adventure. Come autumn, we're taking off for a year of volunteering in southern/eastern Africa. Who knows what will be in store for us, how/if we'll be perceived as a couple, and what it will be like to live in a third world community together. In a way, tho', there seems to be a global sense of freedom in life on the road....either way, it's sweet. 

### Carribean from page 1

living room with its piano and music corner opens right onto a wide deck with tables for outdoor meals and hammocks for reading. There's an open-air kitchen where you can cook your own meals during off-season and where vegetarian meals are prepared on-season (December - May.) There are six bedrooms in the main house, as well as a women's bunkhouse and room for tenting. I loved showering in the outdoor solar-heated showers open to the sky.

If you love natural beauty, a friendly informal atmosphere, comfortable but simple accommodations, and pleasant days that are a mosaic of exploration, relaxation, companionship and solitude, New Dawn is the place for you. It would take pages to tell the whole story, but imagine a few of the pleasures: the night filled with the harmonies of tiny frogs under a sky truly brilliant with stars; turquoise waters and uncrowded white beaches sprinkled with shells; the windows and doors of the guest house open to the warm breezes (and lizards!) day and night; flowers everywhere; afternoon naps in a hammock; snorkeling among branching coral and schools of fish; cold guava juice; fried plantains; walking along the narrow country roads through the hills and finding a herd of horses grazing along the border; a night-time swim in Phosphorescent Bay where microscopic organisms glow brightly (like a firefly) when the water is disturbed so that you swim through light; a trip to the island's museum housed in a Spanish fort, where you can learn of the Taino people who lived on Vieques before the Spanish colonization and study the architecture, economy, and art of the island.

Vieques is a lovely place, but its not all paradise. At the museum and by talking to island residents, you can learn of the struggle over the U.S. military's presence on Vieques. Two-thirds of the island is occupied by a U.S. military base, where two decades ago, island families lived, worked, and fished. While part of the base is open to beachgoers most of the time, the eastern end of the island is closed and is used periodically for bombing exercises.

Residents have varying opinions about the military presence. Some deeply oppose it and one group is working on a plan to transition to a public land trust that would protect the natural environment without the military presence. One aspect of this issue is that the base is probably the major reason that Vieques has been spared the over-development and crowding that tourism has brought to much of the Caribbean. Whatever your own political views may be, as a visitor I think you'll appreciate the beauty of Vieques and

**Carribean** continues on next page



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## Caribbean from previous page

the friendliness of the residents (Puerto Rican and relocated Anglos), and hope that you'll enjoy the island with respect and care.

So how do you get there? For information, prices, and reservations, call New Dawn at (809) 741-0495, or write to P.O. Box 1512, Vieques, PR 00765. The cost is affordable, especially off-season — call to get the specifics for per-room or to rent the whole guest house. You need to plan on travel to the main island of Puerto Rico and then the additional leg to get to Vieques. There are a couple of small air-links and a ferry boat. Have a great time!



## Voyage to Planet California

by Jan Steckel

I land at the airport, rent a car and drive over to my friend Susie the Gynecologist's apartment. She takes me to the Good Vibrations outlet where a transgendered person is signing his book of nude photographs of female-to-male transsexuals. Naturally, he has plenty of negative feelings to express about physicians, having gone through so many surgeries and taken so much flak from doctors about his decisions. So two hours off the plane, I find myself representing the entire medical profession to a roomful of angry people in various stages of transition from female to male, and I'm thinking, *whoa, Toto, I don't think we're in Boston anymore*. In the excitement of the moment, I buy the guy's book. It will make a great coffee table book. Now I'm going to have to buy a coffee table.

Afterwards Susie and I do Tequila shots with lemon and salt until she's crying in my arms and trying in vain to dial her ex-girlfriend to whom she hasn't spoken in seven months. I give her the correct number and go to bed. In the morning, the first thing I see is a cat-o'-nine-tails hanging on the door knob. I turn my head and there on the bedside table is a thirty-two ounce bottle of Astroglide bearing the legend "For Office Use." Before I have time to wonder where I am, I real-

ize it could be only one place: San Francisco. Susie tries to go into work, throws up in front of her chief Resident and gets sent home with putative flu. All she wants to do is sleep.

I feel fine, however, so I get dressed and drive down to Half Moon Bay to visit my cousin Beverly, the Holistic Healer. We meditate with crystals, walk by the ocean and converse with the seals, then go to get my Tarot read. Lucy, the Tarot card reader, puzzles over one card, saying she's getting conflicting messages. That is, she can't tell if the card represents me or a man I'm going to meet. She thinks it's me, but that doesn't make sense because it's distinctly masculine. *Oh no, I think, don't even go there*. It must just be the vibrations from all those people I met last night still clinging to me. Because while I believe in sampling widely from the menu of life, here's my order: "Waiter? Uh, waiter! I'd like my genitalia internally, thank you. Maybe a little fruits and nuts on the side."

I decide to have a talk with my inner man. Knock, knock. Hello, Jerry! You in there?

*Yeah.*

What do you think?

*I think it's time to change the oil in the Honda.*

I mean, about last night.

*All I remember is drinking Tequila in the kitchen with the cute gynecologist. I didn't think we scored.*

No, before that. We met a man who used to be a woman.

*Must be in San Francisco again, huh?*

Jerry, you ever dream about being expressed?

*No. I'm a shy guy. I want to stay inner.*

You ever think about me getting a sex change?

*You want to change something?*

Yes, I do.

*Change the oil.*

## Study in Mexico

CETLALIC, the Centro Tlahuica De Lenguas e Intercambio Cultural, A.C., an alternative language school in Cuernavaca, Mexico, is presenting two special programs in the coming year. "The Lesbian Movement in Mexico" from June 14- July 4, 1997, offers an opportunity to study Spanish and the lesbian movement in Mexico, stay in a lesbian or lesbian-friendly household, and participate in Mexico's Gay Pride march. "Women and Social Change in Mexico" will be held from January 5-17, 1998, and will focus on the women's movement in Mexico and the issues women face there today. For more information on either program, contact Delle McCormick at (617) 492-3531, e-mail [Dellemc@aol.com](mailto:Dellemc@aol.com), or contact CETLALIC directly at Apdo. Postal 1-201, CP 6200/Cuernavaca, Morelos, MEXICO. Their phone is 52-73 12-17-08, e-mail [cetlalic@laneta.apc.org](mailto:cetlalic@laneta.apc.org); [www: http://www.laneta.apc.org:80/cetlalic](http://www.laneta.apc.org:80/cetlalic)

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Boston Apr. 25-27, Nov. 7-9



Call for submissions:

I am looking for excellent quality poetry written by bisexuals for an anthology. The working title is "Bi Any Means Necessary: An Anthology of Bisexual Poetry." Poems may be of any length and may be unpublished or available to be reprinted with permission if previously published. Of special interest are poems that reflect bisexual politics, relationship issues, and the connection with the gay/lesbian and heterosexual communities. Deadline: April 30, 1997

Send to [redacted]

e-mail: [redacted]

## Mothers and Daughters, reprise

### BIGENERATIONS

by Joan Walsh



My daughter is 25 and I am 52. We are both bi, although she protests the use of labels, whereas I find them helpful and politically expedient. We have been through quite a few changes, she and I, but thank the Goddess we are now enjoying the close, comfortable relationship that I've always hoped we would have.

I officially became a single parent when she was 6, and we both went through a nasty and highly stressful custody battle. I won (again, thank the Goddess!), but my victory made it easy for her father to play victim and convince her that I was the "bad gal". It took us a few years to reestablish a close relationship, and after that it was only a few more years until adolescence struck.

Meanwhile, when she was 8, I came out as a lesbian and had my first relationship with a woman. Because of continued custody concerns, I limited my romantic interactions to alternate weekends, when she visited her father, and did not come out to her until she was 11. Within a few months of that conversation, she began acting out. I doubt either of us will ever be sure how much of her early-adolescent rebellion was caused by resentment of my placing her in what she saw as an uncomfortable social situation. She attended a very progressive Quaker school, but at that time (1983) it was difficult to be the child of a lesbian mom anywhere. Fortunately for both of us, the first lesbian mothers' support group in our area started that same year, and we were able to share our feelings with other moms and kids to some extent.

Things went along, sometimes smooth and sometimes rocky, until mom's identification changed again when she was 15. I'd been studying karate for years, and found myself

becoming friends with a certain fellow student who happened to be male...a very unusual circumstance, since most of the guys I trained with were not exactly friendly to feminist dykes! Anyway, as you can see coming, we got together and it became an ongoing relationship. My daughter, poor kid, had just about gotten OK with mom being queer, and now she didn't seem to be any more (not true, of course). This was in 1986, and while y'all up in Boston were already out as bi and proud, folks just did not identify that way down in Durham, NC...at least I didn't know any! So I just tried not to think about my orientation much, or copped Holly Near's "lesbian who sleeps with men," since I always admired her anyway. Eventually, my kid got to like my partner pretty well, and things settled down again.

She had always seemed to be interested in boys exclusively, and as her senior year got underway she became sexually involved with a guy in her class. She'd had a crush on him for years, and their relationship became quite serious, much to my dismay. He was not a very together kid, to say the least, and we had pregnancy scares and many long and difficult struggles during that year. When they graduated, she moved out with him, and I worried until they broke up about a year later. She carried a torch for him for another year after that, and it continued to be hard for us to be close. Around this time, I fell quite thoroughly in love with a woman, and had a brief but intense relationship that was hard on my long-term partner, but he hung in.

My relationship with this woman ended just as the first bisexual women's support group was getting underway in Durham. The timing was perfect for me...I started reading bi books as well, and felt as if I had finally figured out who I was at the age of 46. My daughter seemed distant at that time anyway, and my coming out all over again was not anything she appeared to relate to. Imagine my surprise when, less than a year later, she told me she had been involved briefly

**Bigenerations** continues on page 10



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## LEGACY



The woman on the videotape  
dances, sings at a party still raucous with its  
guests.  
Bunned hair set loose, clothing sensuous,  
undulating, hamming it up and votive at  
once.  
Youthful — something that once embarrassed  
me  
(age is taken more seriously; well, just wait  
till I put my hair back up).

But I saw you.  
You, dead for 14 years,  
Keeping up the smile for company  
while your heart thundered toward its end.  
Hiding your tears till the movies,  
when it was safe to free them  
as cinematic lovers parted.  
You, who did not dance —  
but whose chunky body turned fluid grace  
on the diving board.  
You, who dressed in theater drag  
through girls' high school, wartime college,  
born, said the doctors, with "a male skeleton."  
Who told me she found women's bodies more  
beautiful than men's.  
When I asked you what you meant  
you narrowed the criteria: Miss America is  
more beautiful than Mr. America  
— he has too many muscles —  
I wondered how you felt about women body  
builders,  
was too timid to ask.

You tried to teach me the games of getting  
boys,  
tried to feminize me. I saw in you an incur-  
able romantic  
driven unto death by your desperate need to  
be loved.  
It would take a woman  
to free that part of you in me.  
Told you I was attracted to women as well as  
to men.  
"Aren't all women?" you asked.  
Took me years to find out: no.

By that time, what was left of you  
had long dissolved into Nature —  
that force you believed in  
when I asked you if you believed in God.

Seeing your portrait fashioned by your  
brother's hands,  
people ask me, "Who painted that of you?"  
Hair up in a bun, like mine — but the differ-  
ent eye color  
gives it away.  
But I saw you, Mother, in a videotape.  
In the women who looked suddenly young.  
Who moved freely, without shame  
after a youth spent paralyzed because carnal  
meant terror.  
Your hidden self, kept carefully guarded,  
emerging brazenly in a daughter aged four  
years younger  
than you had been the first time your heart  
had failed.

I, the woman on the video —  
dancing with my wife, who shares your natal  
sign.  
Who courted me by reading Keats while I,  
stunned, thought:

Mom — you would have loved her.

*Elissa Malcohn*  
3 December 1996



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### Call for Submissions

In the Red is seeking  
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(under 27 years old) for  
an anthology. Each sub-  
mission is limited to one 8  
1/2 by 11 sheet of paper,  
but multiple submissions  
are allowed. A photo-  
graphic portrait will ac-  
company each author's  
piece. Contribution dead-  
line is April 30, 1997.

Contact them at In  
The Red, 4847 Geary Bou-  
levard, San Francisco, CA  
94118 or call them at 415-  
387-6004.



Call for Submissions:

Editors Kim Howard and Annie Stevens are compiling a new book in which lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender college students share their experiences on coming out or being closeted on their college campuses. If you are or were an undergrad in the '90s, your contribution is invited. For guidelines, write to P.O. Box 5345, Takoma Park, MD 20913, e-mail AS154@umail.umd.edu or go to the web page <http://www.wam.umd.edu/~StevensA/book.html>.

Confidentiality assured. Deadline June 30, 1997.

**Bigenerations** from page 9

with a woman friend of hers!

Still, for the next couple of years, she seemed to be basically heterosexual, and we continued to dance back and forth between closeness and distance. Then, just over two years ago, she started a relationship with a woman she has lived with since. This is her second serious, long-term relationship, and a healthier one by far than the first. We have become gradually, tentatively, but steadily closer, and I feel that her acceptance of her own bisexuality has made her more accepting of mine. I hope we will have a lot of years of sharing and caring ahead!



**Minutes** from page 2

The Bisexual Women's Rap session is still going strong at the Women's Center, with two sessions scheduled for April.

Next the discussion led to the BRC volunteers and how they can work with us to answer phone calls, etc. Debbie will be in touch with the BRC volunteer coordinator to keep the communication up.

Brunches were discussed. Hosts are still needed, and a new brunch diva is needed.

BBWN's presence at the Gay/Straight Youth Pride March in May was discussed. (See the Calendar for more details). Boston Pride is June 7th.

Robyn put in a special thank you to Ellyn for all the work she does keeping BBWN going strong!

The next steering committee meeting will be April 16th at 7 PM! All women are welcome. We will be discussing Pride and the summer regional gathering.

Submitted by Debbie Block-Schwenk

**I wake**

I wake  
with my heart pounding  
in the night.

Loud enough to wake you,  
I think, but you sleep.

Love in silence is not enough.  
Fear engulfs me in the night,  
my tongue tangles without  
words, and you  
do not reply  
to what I do not say.

Rachel Silber

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## CALENDAR *continued from page 12*

women. Bring your favorite episodes on tape. Food contributions welcome. Call Morganne at (617) 625-5966 for directions.



### April 27 ♦ Sunday

**Biversity Brunch** at 1PM at Doyle's in Jamaica Plain, followed by a walk in the Arboretum. Good food, good company, and hopefully good weather! Doyle's is at 3484 Washington St. between Green St. and Forest Hills. Call Doyle's at (617) 524-2345 for directions.

### May 2 ♦ Friday

**Bi Women** deadline for submissions. The theme is "Mixed Marriages" and Cross-orientation relationships — relationships with people who are not bisexual. Pros? Cons? Stories? Thoughts? Share them with us. See page 2 for submission information.

### May 3 ♦ Saturday

**Biversity Games Party** at Jay and Heidi's, at 1:30 PM. Games, snacks and community in a fun, non-competitive atmosphere. In Brighton. Call (617) 782-4235 or e-mail js@aq.org for directions.

### May 4 ♦ Sunday

**Bi Space.** First hour's topic: "Do you believe in love at first sight?" (See April 6th).

### May 6 ♦ Tuesday

**Conference Planning Meeting,** 7-9 PM at the Bi Office. Help plan the 1998 International Bi Conference to be held right here in Boston.

**Bi Women's rap** at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant Street in Central Square. 7:30-9 PM, topic tba. Call the Women's Center for more information at (617) 354-8807.

### May 7 ♦ Wednesday

**Coming Out as Bisexual,** 7-9 PM at the Bi Office. (See April 2 for more information.)

### May 8 ♦ Thursday

**Bi Married Women's Support Group,** 7-9 PM at the Bi Office. (see April 10 date for more info.)

### May 9th ♦ Friday

**Bi Coffeehouse,** 7:00 PM at The Casual Cup, 1362 Beacon Street, Brookline. A great place to meet and greet. \$5 cover charge, helps pay the musician(s) who will perform and includes \$1.50 toward the cost of your first beverage. Nearest T stop is Coolidge Corner on the C branch of the Green Line.

### May 14 ♦ Wednesday

**BBWN Introductory Meeting.** A safe space for women to connect with the bisexual community. 7:30 p.m.- 9 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., (Central Sq.), Cambridge. Info: (617) 354-8807.

**BRC Board Meeting** 7-9 p.m. at the Bi Office. The Bisexual Resource Center educates the public on bi issues. All bi and bi-friendly people are welcome to come help plan and organize this work.

### May 15 ♦ Thursday

**Biversity Planning meeting,** 7-9 PM at the Bi Office. Join the other women and men in Biversity in coming up with events for the next two months and planning Pride events.

### May 17 ♦ Saturday

**Biversity Brunch** at Johnny D's at 11:30 AM. This popular restaurant is in Davis Square, Somerville — come join us. Just off the Red Line on Holland Street

**The 3rd Annual Gay/Straight Youth Pride March** begins at noon on the State House Steps. BBWN will be there to show our support; leave a message at the office if you want to join our contingent. For more information on the march itself, call the Governor's Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth at (617) 727-3600 x312.

### May 18 ♦ Sunday

**BBWN potluck brunch** at 11:30 AM. At Deborah's in lovely Jamaica Plain. Close to T and bus lines. Call Deborah at 524-5833 for directions and more information. All women welcome

### May 20 ♦ Tuesday

**Coming Out as Bisexual.** 7-9 p.m. (see May 7th)

**Bi Women's Rap,** 7:30 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St, Cambridge. Call (617) 354-8807 for discussion topic or other info.

### May 25 ♦ Sunday

**Biversity Brunch** at Addis Red Sea on Tremont St at 1 PM. Explore Eithiopian food with us!

### May 27 ♦ Tuesday

**BBWN newsletter stuffing,** 7-9 PM at the Bi Office. Pick a copy of the latest newsletter, catch up with your friends, and help up get the newsletter out to our subscribers.

### June 7 ♦ Saturday

**Boston Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Pride march.** Come walk with BBWN and the other bi groups in a show of visibility and solidarity. Call the office if you want to get involved in planning to make this the best Pride ever.

## SUBMIT!!

### TO BI WOMEN!

This is *your* newsletter and we *need* your stories. Articles on any topic are welcome!

Letters, poems, black-and-white artwork, doodles, jokes, experiences, ideas....

See page two for submission guidelines, or leave a message at the office for anyone on the Editorial Team.

**BBWN is looking for a few good women to host potluck brunches.** For more info, call Debbie at (617) 731-9060 or email her at starfurry@worldnet.att.net.

## Advertise in BiWomen!

For only \$15 per issue, your message will reach over 700 subscribers. Save \$5 and advertise in three issues for \$40.

Send a business-card sized ad or personal ad (50 words or less) and a check (to BBWN) to:

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BBWN

P.O. BOX 639

Cambridge, MA 02140



## The "Bi Office"

is the Bisexual Resource Center, located at 29-33 Stanhope Street, behind Club Cafe' and right next door to Bertucci's. For info call (617) 424-9595.

## Ongoing Events

### 1st & 3rd Tuesdays:

**Bi Women's Rap**, 7:30 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St, Cambridge. For info and discussion topics call (617) 354-8807.

### Wednesdays:

**Say It, Sister!** radio show on WMBR 88.1 FM (first on your FM dial!). 7:30-8:30pm. Info and topics: (617) 253-8810.

### 3rd Thursdays:

**GLBisexual Speakers Bureau Meeting**, 8pm, at the Boston Living Center, 29-33 Stanhope Street, Boston (in the same building as the bi office). Wheelchair accessible. General meeting at 6:45pm with the theme program starting at 8pm. Info: (617) 354-0133.

### Saturdays:

**Lavender Country Dance Group**, 8-11pm, beginners lesson 7:30. Smoke- and alcohol-free. Open to all gays, lesbians, bisexuals and their friends. First Church of Jamaica Plain, corner Centre and Eliot Sts., JP. On MBTA Green and Orange lines. \$5. Info: Janet, (617) 522-2216.

# CALENDAR

## April 1 ♦ Tuesday

**Bi Women's Rap**, 7:30 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St, Cambridge. Tonight's topic is "Is this a date or what?" Tell your stories, hear others' thoughts and meet new friends. Info: (617) 354-8807.

## April 2 ♦ Wednesday

**Coming Out as Bisexual**. An informal support group for people who think they may be bisexual or attracted to more than one gender. 7-9 p.m. at the Bi Office. A small donation is requested to help pay for the space. Sponsored by the Bisexual Resource Center. Info (617) 424-9595.

## April 5 ♦ Saturday

**Biversity Games Party** at Jay & Heidi's at 1 PM. Bring a snack to share and/or your favorite games! T-accessible in Brighton. Call (617) 782-4235 or e-mail js@aq.org for directions.

## April 6 ♦ Sunday

**Storytelling Workshop**. Looking for a safe creative space to tell stories about the mystery of sex and the wonders of gender? BBWN's Ann Golgia is presenting a one-day workshop: "Creating stories from our experience of gender and sexuality." 11 AM-5 PM, sliding scale \$40-\$70. On public transportation in Watertown. Call Ann for more information, 923-8716



**Bi Space**, 7-9 p.m. at the Bi Office. A friendly discussion space to meet other bisexuals and talk about bisexual issues. First hour's topic: "How to reach all those hidden bisexuals." A \$2 donation is requested to help pay for the meeting space.

## April 9 ♦ Wednesday

**Bi Conference Planning Meeting**, 7-9 PM. The International Conference on Bisexuality will be in Boston in 1998. Help plan for this exciting event! Join us at the Bi Office.

## April 10 ♦ Thursday

**Bi Married Women's Support Group** meets from 7-9 PM. Married to a man? In a relationship with a man? Interested in talking with people who are? Please join us! Held at the Bi Office. Call Debbie at (617) 731-9060 for more information.

## April 11 ♦ Friday

**Bi Coffee House**, 7:30 PM at the bi-owned and operated Casual Cup coffeehouse, 1362 Beacon Street, Brookline. Enjoy food, friends, and live music! \$5 cover charge includes \$1.50 toward the cost of a beverage and hours of live acoustic music. Nearest T stop is Coolidge Corner, on the C branch of the Green Line.



## April 13th ♦ Sunday

**Office Cleanup**, 2-6 PM. Help us organize and explore the hidden treasures of the bi office!

**Volunteer meeting**, 6-8 PM. What does the Bisexual Resource Center do, and how can you help? Find out, make new friends, and enjoy free pizza. At the Bi Office.

## April 15 ♦ Tuesday

**Coming Out as Bisexual**. An informal support group for people who think they may be bisexual or attracted to more than one gender. 7-9 p.m. at the Bi Office. A small donation is requested to help pay for the space. Sponsored by the Bisexual Resource Center. Info (617) 424-9595.

**Bi Women's Rap**, 7:30 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St, Cambridge. Tonight's topic is "First kiss." Of course you remember... Info: (617) 354-8807.

## April 16 ♦ Wednesday

**BBWN Steering Committee Meeting**, 7-9 PM at the Bi Office. A summer regional gathering and plans for this June's Pride march are among the topics to be discussed. Come bring your ideas!

**BRC Board meeting**, 7-9 PM at the Bi Office.

## April 19 ♦ Saturday

**BBWN potluck brunch** at noon at Loretta's in Revere. On a bus line, some car pooling available. Call Debbie at 731-9060 if you're interested for directions and transportation information. All women welcome.

## Brainstorming the spring fling at 2 PM:



come share your ideas on how to bring together the region's bi women for a one-day gathering late this spring or early this summer. Immediately following the brunch at Loretta's.

**Biversity Brunch** 11:30AM at Baja Cafe on Dartmouth St. Join us for modern Tex-Mex style cuisine with a twist. Near the Copley and Back Bay T stations.

## April 25-27 ♦ Friday-Sunday

**Body Electric's "Celebrating the Body Erotic for Women" workshop**, a celebration of women's sexuality and spirituality, is coming to Boston. For more information call (508) 462-4944.

## April 26 ♦ Saturday

**Biversity Xenathon** at 2 PM. Join your friends in watching this fun show featuring two strong, sexy

**CALENDAR** continues on page 11



## Mixed Marriages

### Bi for Good

by Vivienne Esrig

What happens when a bisexual woman marries a lesbian? Why, she becomes a lesbian, of course. "A lesbian by default," that's what my friends say.

Well, not if I have anything to say about it.

I am bisexual. I have had relationships with men and women; some good, some bad, some not worth remembering. And, I have to tell you, I love this part of myself and I wouldn't change it for a minute. Not that I could, mind you, but I wouldn't.

I have had the good fortune to meet the love of my life. This person and I knew from the very beginning that it was destiny, fate, kismet - whatever you want to call it, whatever cliché fits your mood. Not everyone is lucky enough to find such an individual for herself; we know we are both blessed. And, she didn't run in the opposite direction when she learned I am bisexual, as lesbians often do. I am happy to report that we decided to share our undying devotion for each other with our friends and family; our wedding is at the end of the month.

Here comes the tricky part...does being in a forever kind of thing with another woman mean I lose my precious bisexual identity? Nope.

I am not moving to lesbianland; I am not giving up my attraction for men (certain men - I am somewhat discerning) and I am not, I repeat, not going to passively let everyone who learns of my new wife assume that I am gay.

Easier said than done.

I tried to tell my mother that I was still bisexual even though I was marrying a woman and that if someone called me a lesbian she should correct them, if she could. She didn't understand until I offered this analogy - I asked her if she was converting to Christianity.

"No, I am Jewish."

**Bi For Good** continues on page 10

### Perspectives on Our Mixed Marriage - From Both Sides

by Elissa Malcohn and Mary C. Russell

*Elissa (bisexual, Jewish, only child, wavy hair, does not wear glasses):*

While celebrating my 20th year of identifying and being out as bi, I married a woman. I hadn't made love to a woman for a dozen years, to anyone but myself for almost five. The first and only other woman I'd made love to had wanted to be bi, but was, in her words, "terminally heterosexual," and our one-time experience had confirmed our own natures to each of us.

I was bi, and out, when I was married to a man - had in fact come out to my mother during my engagement (it was safe, then) and to myself and a classmate when I was still a virgin (ditto). As my marriage deteriorated I networked with more and more women's groups, and became involved with the BBWN shortly after moving to Massachusetts in 1983. My relationships with men post-divorce had each reached their stumbling blocks not with sex but with gender roles. With men I was "one of the boys," maintaining my own independence often to their chagrin. With all the stereotypes of women clutching their men to them, my experience was the opposite.

A few years ago my focus changed. After living alone and thriving for more than a decade, I wanted a long-term, stable relationship. I wanted to settle down with someone again. And I wanted that someone to be a woman. The humanist in me rankled; I have always and still do view people as people, seeking out the individual rather than the gender. But I had to admit to myself that this was an exception. Partly because except for my own, earlier experience with a woman, my fantasies were all I had to go on. Partly because I was tired of dealing with the tensions that arose from my involvements with men. Partly because there were parts of me not yet freed, that (as it turned out) my

**Perspectives** continues on page 4

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## Volunteers of the Month



Jean M.  
Ellen  
Deborah Levine  
Rosalie  
Debbie Block-  
Schwenk  
Ellyn Ruthstrom

*And many more  
wonderful  
women! You  
know who you  
are! Thank you,  
thank you, thank  
you!*  
**Thanks again!**

BiWomen is published  
bi-monthly.

Editorial Team for this  
issue of BiWomen:

Linda Blair

Debbie Block-Schwenk

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recycled paper**

## In the Mail

Dear Lisa and *BiWomen*,

Thank you so much for your story, "Retreat to the Carribean" in your April/May 1997 issue. I am happy to have had the opportunity to invite your group to New Dawn and happier still that you enjoyed your visit.

As I was mentioning to some of you, after spending my last 11 years making New Dawn a reality, I am in the process of turning New Dawn over to new owners. I am still going to be involved...to a much lesser extent, and the new owners are wanting to continue the retreat/guesthouse/campground much as I have done in the past. They are also offering special group rates during the "off season."

I thank *BiWomen* for your support through the years in your visiting New Dawn, for the articles printed and being available for me to place my ads in your publication. Please know you will all be welcome in the future.

Sincerely,

Gail Burchard, Owner/Operator



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### Other designs include:

- If God had meant for people to be bisexual there would be two sexes
- Bisexual Pride
- I'm bisexual and I'm NOT attracted to you
- Racism, sexism, homophobia - Recognize the Connections

*The Boston Bisexual Women's Network is a feminist, not-for-profit collective organization whose purpose is to bring women together for support and validation. It is meant to be a safe environment in which women of all sexual self-identities, class backgrounds, racial, ethnic and religious groups, ages, abilities and disabilities are welcome. Through the vehicles of discussion, support, education, outreach, political action and social groups related to bisexuality, we are committed to the goals of full acceptance as bisexuals within the gay and lesbian community, and to full acceptance of bisexuality and the liberation of all gay people within the larger society.*

## Coming in *Bi Women*:

The Theme for the August/September issue is

## Gender

Tell us about your own thoughts, feelings and experiences on how gender affects your life, gender identity, gender-bending, transgenderism, etc. *People of all genders and gender identities are welcome to make submissions for this issue.*

DEADLINE: July 4, 1997

Please provide submissions on paper (typed or handwritten), on disk (PC or Mac) or by e-mail (to [lindab@shore.net](mailto:lindab@shore.net) and [starfurry@worldnet.att.net](mailto:starfurry@worldnet.att.net). Please submit only *text* by e-mail. We cannot accept your art or photos electronically.) Include your name and phone number if possible.

*If you do not want your name published, please tell us.* Otherwise, we may assume that you do not mind being listed as a contributor. You may contribute anonymously, or use just your first name.

BBWN is starting a World Wide Web page. Selected articles and excerpts from articles will be published on our Web page starting this spring. *If you do not want your work published on the Web, or would like to use a different name for a piece that would appear on the Internet, please let us know.*

Send articles, calendar entries, letters, black-and-white art, news and views to:

BiWomen

P.O. Box 639

Cambridge, MA 02140

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## Steering Committee Minutes, April 16, 1997

Submitted by Ellyn Ruthstrom

Attendees: Ellyn, Robyn, Rosalie

GLBT Youth Pride is May 17th at the State House. Those who are able are encouraged to go and show support.

Boston Pride, June 7th: BBWN will be marching in the Pride Parade. We must locate the banner and get prepared. Ellyn will call 'tina to make sure the banner is still usable. It was agreed that BBWN would sponsor another Pre-Pride Party on June 6th. We will have food and drink and music, and for those who would like to carry signs on Saturday there will be poster board and markers to make them. Also noted is that 1998 would be the 15th anniversary of BBWN and it would be a wonderful time to do something "bigger" in Pride. Maybe a float???

Sojourner Fundraiser: Ellyn brought in information sent by Sojourner about their fundraising events in May. She proposed that BBWN buy 15 tickets to their comedy night at the discounted rate of \$12 per ticket and contact members to have an outing. Everyone agreed, Robyn said she would send in the money, Ellyn will contact members and organize the outing.

The new buttons have arrived. Robyn will get some to Ellyn, who will fill the mail orders. We will take them to Pride and other events during the year to sell.

Robyn mentioned the idea of surveying the readers of *BiWomen*. It's been done before and is probably time to do it again. She will bring a sample to the next meeting of what has been used before.

Robyn mentioned that Glad Day Books had *Bi Any Other Name* on sale for \$6 each.

Next steering committee meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 18th.

## BiNet Annual Meeting

by Kirsten Isgro

The BiNet USA 1997 Annual Meeting is Thursday, June 5-Sunday, June 8 in Orlando, Florida. Friday and Sunday are business meetings and Saturday is a BiVisibility Day in conjunction with Lesbian and Gay Day at Disney World.

Topics for the meeting include long-range planning for BiNet USA, rural organizing, fund raising, the Bisexual Youth Initiative, and community organizing.

The cost for the meeting is \$50. To register, you can contact <zanetta@orlando.com> or call me, Kirsten Isgro (Northeast BiNet Regional Coordinator) at 802-658-9554. You can automatically become a BiNet member when you register. It's a great way to meet other bisexual activists and allies.



ALACE, the Association of Labor Assistants and Childbirth Educators, is holding a Labor Assistants Training Workshop from Sept. 5-7 in Great Barrington, MA. Labor Assistants support women in labor, providing emotional support and a physical presence that can reduce the length of labor, ensure a healthier labor and reduce the need for cesareans and other interventions.

ALACE is a national non-profit educational organization that supports woman-centered childbirth and offers women a chance to reclaim the historic role of helping other women through childbirth.

For more information on the workshop and how to become a certified Labor Assistant or Childbirth Educator, contact Sarah Proechel at 413-229-8976 or ALACE at P.O. Box 382724, Cambridge, MA 02238, phone 617-441-2500, e-mail [alacehq@aol.com](mailto:alacehq@aol.com).

### Join BiNet USA

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# CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

I am seeking writing contributions by bisexual people of faith (Jews, Christians, Pagans, Quakers, UU's, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Wiccans, people in 12-step recovery, as well as those following other spiritual paths) for an anthology. The working title of the anthology is *A Wideness of Spirit: Testimonies of Bisexual People of Faith*. My intended focus at this point is the presence of connections/intersections/links between your sexuality and your spirituality, but I'm open to broadening this focus depending on submissions.

In addition to seeking a broad range of religious/spiritual/theological locations and experiences, I hope the anthology will exhibit race/class/gender/age/geographic diversity, and that writers will reflect on the impact of these identities. I'm also seeking contributors who handle their bisexuality in a variety of ways.

Essays, journal entries  
*continued on next page*

## Perspectives from page 1

marriage to Mary has liberated. I prepared myself for disaster: maybe my spouse doesn't exist. Maybe I'm focusing on women because I haven't been disillusioned there, yet. Maybe I'm just all talk and no action.

We'd both been looking for a long-term relationship. We'd both been married before (Mary to a woman), and we'd both been celibate for years. We'd already known each other on a platonic level. I found that while being with men brought out more of the masculine in me, I could, for the first time, be truly girlish with Mary. In fact, I had not laughed and giggled so much since I'd been a teenager, closely bonded with two childhood girlfriends, before feeling utterly abandoned by them when they started chasing boys. At the same time that Mary and I liberated each other in ways we hadn't been before, we've nurtured each other, giving and taking in turn. The romanticism I had rejected since grade school took me over like a tsunami. If I was a closet anything all my life, it was a closet romantic.

I have always been monogamous in my relationships, and have always maintained my bisexuality. I still am and still do. But I observe the change in conditions, both internally and externally, and do a periodic check to determine where "You Are Here" is. Mary is the first person I have lived with since my husband. It's not only the gender of my spouse that has changed, it's the nature of the relationship; after I left my husband, my male lovers had been friends but not life partners.

I myself am not fully comfortable with the term bisexual, for one thing, because it excludes intersexed individuals and assumes a duality based on its extremes. Emotionally, Mary and I both deal with the issues as they come up (because we never know what's going to come up when). At a recent conference I

felt a bit more self-conscious wearing my Bisexual Pride button, because I didn't know how it would affect Mary, so we talked about it. Mary felt the same self-consciousness when we were walking hand in hand and a male passenger in a car driving by shouted, "Hey, are you guys Lesbians?" She shouted back, "Yes, are you?" I was fine with that, because if she'd tried to say, "Well, I'm a Lesbian but my partner is bisexual..." they'd have been in the next county before she could have gotten the sentence off. What's important is that we're both supportive of each other through the confusion. (It works in other directions, too. Both of us assumed a man at the aforementioned conference to be gay, when he was really a straight ally, simply because of the setting of the conference itself.)

*Mary (Lesbian, raised Catholic, 1 of 5 children, straight hair, glasses):*

If I had let my defenses against bi women stand in my way, I would not be saying to my wife, "That's not important now. We have seventy years, after all." I had gathered my reasons carefully, and they seemed reasonable. My first woman lover (I ran away from the idea of a straight marriage with a man) called herself bi, and within a year after our breakup, she had married her high school sweetheart. True, he changed his name to hers, but still. In my 80% dyke rugby team, a teammate spoke from personal experience: "You can't trust those bisexuals. They'll turn on you every time." For all I know, she may have had a survey population of two, but I thought she spoke the truth. Besides, me romantic? That's for people who exaggerate the good things they see in another person, and minimize what they find objectionable. Who wants that?! Sounds like putting blinders on.

*Perspectives continues on next page*

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## Perspectives from previous page

Two and a half years ago I returned to a gym where I had worked through some incest issues in a group that combined exercise, powerful songs, and supportive release sessions. This time a holiday crafts fair was going on, and I stopped to reminisce. I had spent the early afternoon at a women's writing group (non-professional, or it would have scared me away). Another woman at the craft fair had also been at the writing group, so I felt safe in telling her what memories the room had brought up. I told her I was a lesbian, she told me she was bi and also had childhood abuse issues, that she didn't judge based on the sex of the person, but on what she saw in that person. I told her about my learned misgivings, but not about my feeling that her way was less prejudicial, that there was something wrong in my excluding half the population. We left it at that.

About a year later, after she had participated in the first Boston to New York AIDS Ride, 261 miles by bicycle, to which I had contributed a bicycle poem (but no money), we met again at the writing group. Nothing happened at first, though she did say the poem was part of the literature covering her kitchen wall with inspiration and exercise routines. But at last we had a couple of lesbian dates after the writing group meetings (one definition of lesbian date: An unstructured meeting of women to which everyone is invited but only two show up, and neither finds a reason to leave).

Finally, after an hour and a half of trudging with her through snow piles in the dusk, and threatening myself with another 38 years without the right person, and all for lack of asking, I heard her murmur something about 'ambience' when a street light went out. I asked whether she was going with anyone. She laughed and put her arm around my shoulder. I still had to hear it in words that she was willing for me to be the person she would go with, but she said it.

Thank goodness. We were approaching my car, and I don't think I would have had the nerve to ask once we got in out of the snow.

I was relieved and happy, but still filled with plenty of fears and stereotypes. For example, I had figured that anyone who's been bisexual for 20 years must have a lot of experience on "both sides" and mastered a variety of techniques. (I remembered one previous lover who could time when she came, and although I never learned her secret, here might be a second chance!) And, of course, there was the fear that Elissa would leave me for a man, or maybe even run home to her parents, as another of my previous lovers had.

I've learned a lot since then. As the days and weeks progressed, I learned my new lover was not going to run off on me, or realize any of my other bi based fears, but neither was she the technical expert I was imagining. As I learned these things my humility grew along with my happiness. I found myself saying, "I'm making this up," and learning and inventing on the spot.

I've also come to understand that I am not a bad person for knowing my own gender preference; I am just more comfortable with women.

Before long, I began to believe my undreamable dream might come true. I now realize how lucky I am to have found a woman who knows herself, has survived amazing odds, and was willing to take a chance on me.

And romance? So far our honeymoon has lasted over a year and a half, centering on the things we like in each other and letting alone the little things that could be abrasive. Come to think of it, that's not a bad way to have a lifelong relationship.



## from previous page

tries, prayers, songs and liturgy are welcome; there is no word count restriction at this stage (but the longer your submission, the more likely it is that it will be edited for length). Submissions can be published anonymously or pseudonymously, but I will need your name and other information for initial communication. All published contributors will receive one copy of the request).

Send submissions, ideas, questions to Amanda Udis-Kessler, PO Box 1814, Cambridge, MA 02238. If you can send both a hard copy and an IBM-compatible (Windows/Microsoft Word) disk, you will have my utmost appreciation. Please also feel free to call me at 617/273-9462 or 617/776-8540, or email me at [aukerc@world.std.com](mailto:aukerc@world.std.com) with your thoughts and queries. I look forward to hearing from you.



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# The Challenge Clause

By Debbie Block-Schwenk

## Other Bi Groups:

New Hampshire Bi Women's Group

New Bi Women's discussion group meets the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays in Portsmouth, NH, from 7-8:30 P.M. Other social events are also being planned. For information, call Charlene at 603-749-0795.

The Capital District Bisexual Network based in Albany, NY, hosts various events and prints a newsletter, *The BiNotes*. For more information or to obtain a copy of the newsletter, write them at CDBN, P.O. Box 3117, Albany, NY 12203, call 518-462-6138 and leave a message in box #48, or e-mail garylwhittaker@worldnet.att.net

Kevin and I took our wedding vow from a book on creating one's own wedding ceremony. I think, in fact, that some other couple had written the vow and it was included in the book as an example, but we grabbed it. Among the promises to love and to support each other, etc., there was the line

*"I promise to challenge you always"*

A friend said it was very appropriate for us to have a line like that, and the more I think about what a marriage means to me, the more I'm glad it's there. I didn't sign a legal document and say vows simply because, as a woman in love with a man, that was the simple, comfortable, societally-approved thing to do. I did it because making a public commitment to someone is an affirmation of love and an acknowledgement of the difficulties any people in any relationship have to overcome and continue overcoming in order to make that relationship work. In short, a marriage is a challenge.

And we joke about it whenever things are a little rough, or after an argument: "Line 4 — or is it 5?" "Line 5?...Oh, the challenge clause." And then we groan and laugh, and pretend to complain, but not having it would not make these issues go away. At least in our apartment it's out in the open, our vow tacked to a small bulletin board between a Star Trek trading card and a photo of a curvaceous belly dancer.

Most of these challenges have nothing to do with the fact that I'm bisexual and my spouse is straight. Some of them do. In trying to negotiate a limited open marriage, in dealing with the jealousies and insecurities that involves, we've spent a lot of time quoting the challenge clause, especially in the past couple of months when we were briefly involved in a triad with a female friend.

I'm lucky in that I have a spouse who is incredibly supportive and queer-friendly. He's comfortable hanging out with me in the bi com-

munity and is unfazed at being the only straight male at the weekly "gay" bridge night he attends. He reads this newsletter faithfully and at least glances at the gay paper I pick up every week. He is as philosophically committed to gay rights and equality as I am.

Where theory turns to practice, though, where reality is colored by identity, that's where some of the challenges lie. He says that since we're for the moment monogamous that my bisexuality somehow takes second stage, not understanding that I'll be bi every minute for the rest of my life regardless of whether or not I ever go to bed with a woman again. Not understanding that I'm very conscious, holding his hand and walking down the street, that it's different from the times I held a woman's hand walking down the street, that in our culture one is not even thought about and the other is — a challenge. Knowing and yet not understanding that I'm looking at women passing by the same way he is looking at women passing by.

Kev doesn't understand the complexities — or contradictions — of taking on a queer identity because he's never taken on an identity in that way. He moves in many ways — as a straight, white, educated male — from a place of security, from a foundation he trusts. That gives him a self-assurance that he isn't even conscious of. Whereas I — as a bisexual female, and raised by fairly religious Jewish parents — can't trust that foundation: I might fall right through the cracks, or find that the shape of my shoes makes for treacherous footing.

This is most of the time and in many ways an abstract, theoretical difference. No two people are alike and all relationships are about negotiating the thousands of tiny differences in background, in personality, in thought and communication style, and in world view that inevitably occur. Kev and I share a critical view of capitalism, a suspicion of materialism, a deep concern over the treatment of people and animals in this culture, a desire to do what we can to protect the Earth and its inhabitants. We help each other live by these values.

And, sometimes, each one of us helps the other live by values that the other doesn't share. There are times when Kev would prefer if I were straight. That hasn't stopped him from encouraging me to come out and to be a complete and whole human being. When it really counts, he's always been there for me, and I think he always will be... up for the challenge.

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# I Love Lesbians

By Ellyn Ruthstrom

*To my elegant butch, who thought she could pass undetected below my gaydar.*

This article is a massive rewrite of an article I began to write about two weeks ago. I realized that I was taking the topic way too seriously and I had ended up making gross generalizations about all sorts of people, something I really don't like to do. So I will start again and simply begin by saying: I Love Lesbians. (Not ALL lesbians, just one at the moment.)

I have been out as bisexual for many years now, and in that time I have had sexual relationships with straight men, lesbians, and bi women. But all the long-term and most intimate relationships I have had with people since coming out have been with lesbians.

What's funny is that I love the company of bisexual women. I love our flexibility, our passion, our sensuality, our creativity, our nonconformism, our strength, and our love of life. (And I, of course, am not saying that other people do not have these qualities.) I have to spend time in bi space regularly to get that fun-loving feeling from our energy.

Yet...I am turned on by lesbian libidos, dyke dynamics, butch biceps, sapphic sexuality. Perhaps it is that the women I have been most attracted to often embody a wonderful balance of male/female gender traits, and within that I can also play with my own balance of genders. My dream life helped me realize this: sometimes I dream about my women lovers as women, but sometimes they appear as men, yet I know that he is really a she. That balance, that genderplay, excites me.

On a more technical note, there are sometimes aspects of education involved when dating lesbians. There are still so many stereotypes and myths about bis that get passed along the lesbian grapevine. People who retain biphobic sentiments do not make it into a close place in my life, and I feel lucky to have dated several lesbians who were willing to learn about me and about bi identity generally. Thank the goddess, they are out there.

My girlfriend Janice has read *Bi Any Other Name* and has taken time to ask questions about bisexuality. And she realizes (for me

one of the most important things to understand) that my sexuality is not defined by hers, any more than hers would be defined by mine. She also realizes that my bisexuality does not negate the possibility of a monogamous relationship, nor does it mean that I will not feel fulfilled by being only with her. (My girlfriend is also one of those fabulous lesbians who find themselves more attracted to bisexual women than to other lesbians. And it is pure heaven when we find each other.)

But still there are times when there are misunderstandings between lesbians and bis that I see happen because the "givens," the fundamental view of a gay/lesbian perspective, is different from a bi perspective. In fact, at times the "given" of the gay/lesbian perspective and the straight perspective are much more closely aligned because they are both based on the dichotomy of either/or, they are just opposite sides of the same equation. Just as an example, I heard varied reactions to Anne Heche's (Ellen DeGeneres' girlfriend) remarks in the Oprah interview that she had never felt gay before she met Ellen. I found some lesbians thought she was either lying or she was still hesitating to join "the club." Yet I know quite a few bis who related a great deal to what she said and could easily believe in the fluidity of Anne's sexuality.

Identity is personal and the personal is political, to be a bit flippant with an important slogan of our past. For me, the differences of our identities are part of the love and the passion that I find in Janice's arms. So, to again edit my initial remark for greater clarity: I love my girlfriend who is a lesbian. Thank the goddess.



## New Queer Poetry

New this summer from Cleis Press, *Queer Dog: Homo Pup Poetry* is an anthology of poetry about dogs from queer authors. Among many others are poems by W.H. Auden, Robin Becker, Mark Doty, Gertrude Stein, and Kitty Tsui.



## "Paradise" — Women's Outdoor Weekend

Join an all women's weekend of hiking, biking, sports, music, dancing and hanging out in southern New Hampshire June 6-8, 1997. For more information contact Cher Anderson, 23 Thayer Road, Rindge, NH 03461 or call her at 603-532-7449.

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# What's in a Name?

by [REDACTED]

## 'Camp' Camp

'Camp' Camp is the first summer camp geared toward queer adults. The two week-long sessions will be held from August 24-30 and August 31-Sept. 6, in Kezar Falls, Maine.

There will be a mix of free time and guided activities ranging from canoeing, hiking and biking to dancing, theater, and yoga in an all-queer setting.

The fee is \$800 for the week. For more information, contact director Bill Cole at 888-924-8380, e-mail him at [billcole@worldnet.att.net](mailto:billcole@worldnet.att.net), or visit the 'Camp' Camp web site at <http://www.campcamp.com>.

The struggle for language that fits our experience is a familiar one for many bis. We are a people in love with/in hate with labels. We use and appropriate words and long hyphenated phrases to describe who we are, what our lives are like and the variety of our types of relationships.

So then, what do you call a relationship between a man and a woman when at least one of them identifies as bisexual?

My partner, Dick and I (being members of this type of relationship and very happy to be so, thank you very much) have asked this question over the past three years at workshops in Washington, D.C., and in the Midwest, as well as in an on-going group called "Bi the Way, Are You Married?" Most people attending these workshops or groups either were currently in a "relationship," however, they defined it, that included a man and a woman, had been in the past, or were wanting to create one (or more) in their future. Often times, the non-bi partner identified as heterosexual.

In these workshops, the discussions were vigorous and far roaming, but always one of the most interesting parts was the exchanging names or labels. Below is our on-going list (feel free to send us your favorites that we may have missed).

What do we call a relationship between a woman and a man where at least one of them don't define themselves as heterosexual?

1. Heterosexual — often the default, were there even any other choices?
2. Mixed-gender
3. A bi-couple
4. Male/female couple
5. Bi/het couple
6. A heterosexually identified bisexual couple
7. Woman/man or man/woman couple

8. A non-heterosexual couple
9. A mixed couple
10. Mixed orientation
11. Opposite sex couple
12. Alternative relationship
13. A partnership
14. Bisexual male/female relationship
15. A queer relationship
16. Best friends
17. SOFA (Significant Other For Awhile)
18. Just a couple (then heterosexual as sumption takes over)
19. Domestic partners
20. Relationally gifted
21. A pair of Kinsey 3's
22. A lesbian in a mixed marriage
23. Just Jane and Roger, no label at all.

Does this language really matter? After all, a rose by any other name...and all that. For the people we talked with, the reaction to that question ranged from "why bother" to "why confuse people" to "Why not confuse people." One woman went on to say:


"When I describe my relationship in non-standard language, people almost always follow up with questions trying to understand. It's an opportunity to not sink into heterosexual assumption." Another activist in-your-face type said, "Fuck them if they can't get it. It's my relationship and it's not heterosexual, so deal with it."

Although we continue to be strongly "pro-choice" on people's right to use or not use whatever labels they like, I would like to emphasize the critical importance of language in shaping our reality and the reality for those around us. Why not just give in to the societal pressure to "just admit you are a heterosexual couple?" Isn't it just easier to let the assumption ride? To quote Naomi Tucker in her piece entitled "What's In a Name" in *Bi Any Other Name*:


"If we identify ourselves with standard definitions, we shortchange ourselves, painting an incomplete picture of who we really are..."

In the absence of a ready-made label, I must continually explain, in depth, my various intimate connections, friendships, and romances.

*Name continues on next page*



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Name from previous page

What are the "standard definitions"? These are words like husband/wife, married couple, engaged, fiancée, and boyfriend/girlfriend. Words that heterosexuals know and when they hear them assume that means you are "one of them."

There are also words that are commonly used within the gay and lesbian community. Words like partner, lover, girlfriend, or male couple. Words that have their own hard-fought histories and advantages and limitations. (Anyone in business knows that "partner" can conjure up images of being co-owners of an enterprise and girlfriend can also mean "just a friend who happens to be female.")

Bisexuals use and have used both heterosexual and gay/lesbian-created language to try and describe our relationships. But borrowing language, like borrowing clothes, sometimes just doesn't quite fit.

The reality is that we have not been given ready-made words to describe our lives and our loves. So what else is new? Creating something different is harder than going with the status quo. That's life.

I am reminded that certain indigenous arctic people have something like 50 words for different kinds of snow. Maybe there are 50 different descriptions of bisexuality in relationships between men and women, or to describe relationships between people of different sexual orientations. Maybe there are one hundred — or one thousand. We must learn. We must create. Our pale language has not yet begun to expand into all that we need it to be. We can only nurture it and coax it into growing with us.

So there's the list we've gathered. Add your own. Amaze your friends. Confuse your family. Revel in your choices.

Feel free to write with your own additions to this list, or to get information about some research on male-female couples we are beginning. Email [redacted]@MN.USWEST.NET or mail to [redacted] P.O. Box 50711, Mendota, MN 55150.

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## Poetic Expressions



### Friendship

by Jade Crabtree

The value of friendship should not come with a price tag; it should be without restrictions. Friendship should be unconditional. A true friend does not judge you on the color of your skin, your sexual preference, your religious affiliation, or anything. Instead, a friend should love you, warts and all.



Hey, Women!

Join the TEAM:  
The Editorial Team, that is.

If you've ever wondered how the newsletter is put together, where all these articles and bits of news come from, who are these editors, anyway, or if you just plain love words, we'd love your company.

To get involved, call Debbie at (617) 731-9060 or send us e-mail at [starfury@worldnet.att.net](mailto:starfury@worldnet.att.net) and [lindab@shore.net](mailto:lindab@shore.net)

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New Book!

## Bis in Film



### Bisexual

#### Characters in Film From Anais to Zee

by Boston's own Wayne Bryant is out in stores!

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## Bis on the Big Screen: Chasing Amy

Reviewed by Lynne Levine

It's a situation familiar to some of us: after having identified as a lesbian for many years, a woman has made a new friend. There's a strong attraction. She'd like to take this relationship further, but there's just one problem—her new friend is male. To become involved with him would mean having to reevaluate her identity and perhaps risk ostracism from her community; it would turn her world upside down. Not every bisexual woman has lived through this scenario, but those of us who have will nod our heads in recognition at the situation faced by Alissa (Joey Lauren Adams), the female lead character in the new film "Chasing Amy."

My favorite moments in this film are when Alissa grapples with her identity conflict and fear of rejection. There's one very tense scene in which she's with several of her lesbian friends, trying to talk about her new relationship and obviously omitting gender. They press her for the truth. She hesitates, believing they will not take the news well. They don't. But Alissa needs to follow her heart — that's why she came out as a lesbian in the first place. It was this notion that made "Chasing Amy" a bi-positive film for me.

Be forewarned: the story is told from a male point-of-view. As in director Kevin Smith's earlier films ("Clerks" and "Mall Rats"), expect crude language, explicit verbal sexual banter and a lot of what I would label adolescent male humor. But beneath the joking there are complex characters and situations. Many characters aren't entirely heterosexual. For example, there's clearly some unresolved sexual tension between the male lead and his best (male) friend. The characters make mistakes, and the story line doesn't resolve itself neatly or easily for these characters.

As a former lesbian, now happily identifying as bisexual, I enjoyed getting to see a little of my own experience on film, though Alissa, a stereotypically pretty, slutty blonde, was not someone with whom I could readily identify. But I could laugh with recognition and appreciate the courage required for her to act on her desires despite the consequences. I'd like to see a more serious film with a protagonist who goes through a lesbian to bisexual transition, but in the meantime, there's "Chasing Amy."

## Bi For Good from page 1

"Do you want someone thinking you are Christian?"

"No."

"But people say it's the JudeoChristian religion."

"But I am Jewish."

"Yes, Mom, you are a Jew, not a Christian, and I am bisexual, not a lesbian."

I think I got through, sort of.

What's a biwoman to do? Wear a Bisexual Pride pin at all times? Talk about my ex-boy-friends constantly (especially in a room full of lesbians)? I know, a tattoo, perhaps on my cheek, just so there's no mistake - I AM BI. (Damn it.)

I wish I had some answers. I wish I could find a way to make everyone know I am still bisexual irrespective of my relationship.

I bet many of us think that being bi is a pretty special thing, gives us pride. And we wouldn't want to lose that, right? Sure, some biwomen don't care who knows what or who thinks otherwise. More power to y'all, I wish I could be like that. I'm not. I care.

I want to flaunt my bisexuality. Okay, maybe not flaunt it per se, except under certain circumstances. But I don't want to be in the closet with it either.

I am proud to say that my future wife recognizes my multi-gender attraction meter and will make a joke every once in a while about me and some guy. I appreciate that more than she knows. I love her with all my heart and soul but that does not and will not change who I am. And while the occasional cute babe will turn her head, it's reassuring to know that she accepts the fact that it might be the cute babe's male date I look at twice. Or maybe both of them.

So what happens when a bisexual woman marries a lesbian? They live happily ever after.





## CALENDAR *continued from page 12*

### June 22 ♦ Sunday

**Biversity Lunch and Whale Watch.** Meet at 11am in the upstairs dining area at Faneuil Hall. After lunch, we'll walk to the harbor and head off for our *big* adventure. Contact Jay at <js@aq.org> or (617) 782-4235 to RSVP and for info.

### June 29 ♦ Sunday

**Biversity Brunch, 1 pm.** Enjoy good conversation and hearty Mexican taqueria food at Picante, 735 Mass. Ave. in Cambridge. Nearest T stop is Central Square on the Red Line.

### July 1 ♦ Tuesday

**Bi Women's Rap, 7:30 p.m.** (see June 3rd)

### July 2 ♦ Wednesday

**Coming Out as Bisexual, 7-9 pm.** (see June 4th)

### July 4 ♦ Friday

**Bi Women submissions deadline.** The theme is gender. Tell us about your own thoughts, feelings and experiences on how gender affects your life, gender identity, gender-bending, transgenderism, etc. *People of all genders and gender identities are welcome to make submissions for this issue.*

### July 6 ♦ Sunday

**Bi Space, 7-9 p.m.** (see June 1st) The first hour's topic will be "What makes a good relationship?"

### July 9 ♦ Wednesday

**BBWN Introductory Meeting.** A safe space for women to connect with the bisexual community. 7:30 p.m.- 9 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., (Central Sq.), Cambridge. Info: (617) 354-8807.

**Bisexual Resource Center Board Meeting, 7-9 pm.** (see June 11) Input and ideas from all members and

allies of the bisexual community are welcome.

### July 12 ♦ Saturday

**BBWN Women's Party, 8:30 pm.** Come out for a summer night of dancing, flirting and fun at Loretta's house in Revere. Contributions of snack food and soda welcome. T accessible. For directions and info, call Loretta at (617) 284-6768.

### July 15 ♦ Tuesday

**Coming Out as Bisexual, 7-9 pm.** (see June 4th)  
**Bi Women's Rap, 7:30 p.m.** (see June 3rd)

### July 19 ♦ Saturday

**Biversity Brunch, 11:30 am.** at Au Bon Pain in Harvard Square, Cambridge. Nearest T stop is Harvard on the Red Line.

### July 20 ♦ Sunday

**Biversity Trip to Canobie Lake Park, near Salem, NH, 9:15 am-6 pm.** When was the last time you rode a roller coaster or won a stuffed animal for your sweetie? Well, here's your chance to do it again. Meet outside and just to the right of the ticket booth at 11 am. Contact Jay at <js@aq.org> or (617) 782-4235 to RSVP, for directions and car pooling info. Tickets are \$17 (less if over 25 people RSVP).

### July 21 ♦ Monday

**Bisexuality Workshop, 7:30-9:30 pm,** on issues around bisexuality and relationships at Grand Opening, 318 Harvard Street (upstairs in the Arcade Building) in Coolidge Corner, Brookline. \$10. Closest T stop is Coolidge on the C branch of the Green Line. Info: (617) 731-2626.

### July 23 ♦ Saturday

**Biversity Games Party, 6:30 pm.** Come share in the fun at Jay and Heidi's in Brighton. Bring a game and/or a snack to share. Call (617) 782-4235 or e-mail js@aq.org for directions.

### July 27 ♦ Sunday

**BBWN Picnic Brunch.** Pack up something good to eat or drink and meet at Debbie's in Alston at noon. Weather permitting, we'll walk to Summit Avenue Park for a spectacular view and a picnic. Call Debbie at (617) 731-9060 for info and directions. T accessible.

**Biversity Brunch, 1 pm.** Enjoy your favorite Cuban dishes in a bi-friendly atmosphere at Mucho Gusto, 1124 Boylston Street (near Mass. Ave). The nearest T stop is Auditorium on the Green Line.

### July 29 ♦ Tuesday

**BBWN Dinner, 6 pm.** at Bertucci's, 49 Stanhope St., Boston (right next door to the Bi Office). Get to know or catch up with other BBWN members over a meal before heading over to the office for the newsletter mailing.

**BBWN newsletter stuffing, 7-9 PM** at the Bi Office. *Almost* more fun than you can handle on a weeknight! The more hands the better, so please join us.

## The Bisexual Resource Center Needs YOU...

to help organize the **5th International Conference on Bisexuality**, to be held in Boston in 1998.



Please get involved *now* to make this event a success!

**For more information or to volunteer, call or email Wayne at (508) 699-6612 or bryant@tdint.com**

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## The "Bi Office"

is the Bisexual Resource Center, located at 29-33 Stanhope Street, behind Club Cafe' and right next door to Bertucci's. For info call (617) 424-9595.

## Ongoing Events

### 1st & 3rd Tuesdays:

**Bi Women's Rap**, 7:30 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St, Cambridge. For info and discussion topics call (617) 354-8807.

### Wednesdays:

**Say It, Sister!** radio show on WMBR 88.1 FM (first on your FM dial!). 7:30-8:30pm. Info and topics: (617) 253-8810.

### 3rd Thursdays:

**GLBisexual Speakers Bureau Meeting**, 8pm, at the Boston Living Center, 29-33 Stanhope Street, Boston (in the same building as the bi office). Wheelchair accessible. General meeting at 6:45pm with the theme program starting at 8pm. Info: (617) 354-0133.

### Saturdays:

**Lavender Country Dance Group**, 8-11pm, beginners lesson 7:30. Smoke- and alcohol-free. Open to all gays, lesbians, bisexuals and their friends. First Church of Jamaica Plain, corner Centre and Eliot Sts., JP. On MBTA Green and Orange lines. \$5. Info: Janet, (617) 522-2216.

# CALENDAR

## June 1 ♦ Sunday

**Bi Space**, 7-9 p.m. at the Bi Office. A friendly discussion space to meet other bisexuals and talk about bisexual issues. First hour's topic: "Queer science: Is it all in the genes?" A \$2 donation is requested to help pay for the meeting space.

## June 3 ♦ Tuesday

**Bi Women's Rap**, 7:30 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St, Cambridge. Call (617) 354-8807 for discussion topic/info.

**International Conference Planning Meeting**, 7-9pm at the Bi Office. Come help plan the 5th International Conference on Bisexuality to be held in Boston in the spring of 1998 and/or contact Wayne at (508) 699-6612 or bryant@tdint.com to get involved.

## June 4 ♦ Wednesday

**Coming Out as Bisexual**. An informal support group for people who think they may be bisexual or attracted to more than one gender. 7-9 p.m. at the Bi Office. A small donation is requested to help pay for the space. Sponsored by the Bisexual Resource Center. Info (617) 424-9595.

## Join us for this year's HOT Pride Lineup!

### June 6 ♦ Friday

**BBWN Pre-Pride Party**, 7pm at Ellyn's in Davis Square, Cambridge. Gear up for pride by partying with lots of bi and bi-friendly women! We'll eat, drink, dance, socialize and generally have a gay old time. We'll also have plenty of posterboard and markers on hand so you can make your very own sign to carry in tomorrow's parade.

### June 7 ♦ Saturday

**Bi Pride Brunch**, 9-11:30 am. Join the bi community and our allies in celebrating our holiday by attending the annual Bi Pride Brunch at the Community Church of Boston, 565 Boylston St., Boston. \$5-10 sliding scale. This year's brunch is a fundraiser for BBWN. Nearest T stop is Copley on the Green Line.

**Boston Pride March**, 12 pm. Show your bisexual pride by marching with us in the 26th annual Pride March. Meet at the Pride Brunch (see above) or ask where the "29 Stanhope Street group" is lining up. We'll be part of that group.

### June 8 ♦ Sunday

**BBWN Dinner**, 6 pm. The day after Pride, you'll be too pooped to cook -- but not to eat! So join us at the Ghandi restaurant in Central Square, Cambridge for scrumptious Indian food. After dinner, we'll head over to Ryle's in Inman Square and dance the night away with loads of hot women.

## June 11 ♦ Wednesday

**Bisexual Resource Center Board Meeting**, 7-9pm. The BRC board meets monthly to work on educational programs, the 1998 international conference, fund raising and many other issues. All bi and bi-friendly people are welcome to attend.

## June 12 ♦ Thursday

**Bi Married Women's Support Group**, 7-9 pm at the Bi Office. If you are a bi woman married to or in a relationship with a man and interested in talking with others who are, please join us! Call Debbie at (617) 731-9060 to confirm meeting date and for more info.

## June 13 ♦ Friday

**Bi Coffee House**, 7:30 pm. Why spend the evening at home fretting about black cats and ladders? Be brave and join us for food and fun at the Casual Cup coffeehouse, 1362 Beacon Street, Brookline. \$5 cover charge includes \$1.50 toward the cost of a beverage and hours of live acoustic music. Nearest T stop is Coolidge Corner, on the C branch of the Green Line.



## June 14 ♦ Saturday

**Swingtime**, Boston's Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual swing and ballroom dance group, presents a Post-Pride Dance at the Old Cambridge Baptist Church in Harvard Square, Cambridge. Beginner Swing Lesson at 8, dance at 8:45. Admission \$10. Info: (617) 739-9330.

## June 17 ♦ Tuesday

**Coming Out as Bisexual**, 7-9 pm. (see June 4th)  
**Bi Women's Rap**, 7:30 p.m. (see June 3rd)

## June 18 ♦ Wednesday

**BBWN Planning Meeting**, 7-9 pm. at the Bi Office. There's *lot's* to talk about. Hot topics include planning a Fun-draiser and a regional BBWN gathering for the fall. Please join us!

## June 21 ♦ Saturday

**Biversity Brunch** 11:30AM at Thornton's at 100 Peterborough Street in Boston's Fenway. Nearest T stop is Fenway on the D branch of the Green line.

**Rhode Island Pride Parade and Festival** begins at 11 AM with a rally at the State House. After the parade winds its way through downtown Providence, the festival at India Point Park will provide vendors, refreshments, music and entertainment from noon until 6 PM. For info on Bi events in Rhode Island, contact Biversity Rhode Island at (401) 455-3536.

**CALENDAR** continues on page 11



# Gender

## How I Learned to Love My Femme Self, Butch Dykes, and Transgender Warriors

by Liz Nania

I love talking about gender. The topic always arouses such a fury of emotion and opinion. I also love gender outlaws because they arouse torrents of fear and confusion on the streets and in public restrooms. And confusion often leads to awareness; I'm living proof.

It's a known fact (although how widely known, I can't say) that bisexuals and transgendered folks are natural allies. My first memory of the gender community was at the 1987 March on Washington for Gay and Lesbian (but not yet bisexual or transgender) Rights. I had spent countless hours organizing the first ever national contingent and gathering of bisexuals with my partner-in-crime, Lucy. Being 1987, the bi contingent was relegated to the very tail end of the march, as were those other outcasts, our spiritual bedfellows, the transgender contingent. I was curious, saddened and moved by the sight of three or four scowling, scared-looking genetic men in black, brown and navy suburban office worker dresses. I didn't know enough at the time to be properly inspired by these incredibly brave individuals, but I knew as a bisexual we were somehow linked.

Three years later, while involved with a man, I fell deeply, frighteningly, obsessively in love with my first Big Butch. This woman was off the charts. on the femme-to-butch scale. I left my boyfriend for her and haven't looked at a man since. A year later I read *The Persistent Desire, A Femme-Butch Reader* edited by activist Joan Nestle, and everything became as clear to me as sparkling June day after a rainstorm. I had my second coming out: I knew I

**Femme continues on page 4**

## Let's Talk About Gender

by Liz Highleyman

Although the two words are often used interchangeably in casual conversation, "sex" and "gender" have distinct meanings. "Sex" is typically used to refer to a person's genetic and anatomical characteristics — female or male. "Gender" is commonly used both to describe a person's social role and internal identification — woman or man — and their presentation — feminine or masculine.

Traditionally, it has been assumed that sex and gender (and sexual behavior and sexual identity) go together in simple and obvious ways. Women are assumed to be female and feminine (and, traditionally, attracted to men), while men are assumed to be male and masculine (and, traditionally, attracted to women). But the traditional assumptions are inadequate to describe many of the real people in the real world.

Although "woman" and "man" are the two genders traditionally accepted by contemporary Western culture, it can be interesting to consider other gender possibilities. Many lesbians and some bi women identify as butches or femmes. A stone butch and a high femme may well have less in common with each other than do an androgynous man and an androgynous woman, even though the former are of the "same" sex and the latter are of the so-called "opposite" sex.

When we talk about bisexuality, it is usually assumed that we're talking about biological sex, not gender. A lesbian who is attracted to both butch and femme women is considered homosexual, although I would also call her "bigenderal." A person may be attracted to only femme/feminine people or to only butch/masculine people. Because femme/feminine and butch/masculine appearance, characteristics, and mannerisms may be found in both women and men, such a person is likely to be thought of using the traditional scheme as "bisexual," although it may actually be gender, not sex, that is the important factor in their attraction — such a person may be bisexual, but also "monogenderal."

**Talk continues on page 5**

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### Volunteers of the Month

Ellyn  
Deveane  
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Linda Blair  
Sally Wagner  
Lynne Levine  
Lynn Rosenbaum  
Cori DeSaulnier  
Rosalie  
Lucy  
Robyn Ochs  
Kate Griffin

*And many more  
wonderful  
women! You  
know who you  
are! Thank you,  
thank you, thank  
you!*

Thanks again!

BiWomen is published  
bi-monthly.

Editorial Team for this  
issue of BiWomen:

Linda Blair  
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*The Boston Bisexual Women's Network is a feminist, not-for-profit collective organization whose purpose is to bring women together for support and validation. It is meant to be a safe environment in which women of all sexual self-identities, class backgrounds, racial, ethnic and religious groups, ages, abilities and disabilities are welcome. Through the vehicles of discussion, support, education, outreach, political action and social groups related to bisexuality, we are committed to the goals of full acceptance as bisexuals within the gay and lesbian community, and to full acceptance of bisexuality and the liberation of all gay people within the larger society.*

### Is it gonna be a long, lonely winter?

I know you don't want to even think about it yet! But what could be a better way to warm yourself up on some of those chilly evenings than hanging out, gossiping, and, yes, planning the future of BBWN with your fellow queer women?

We urgently need a new co-editor or two for *BiWomen*; Debbie's work and life commitments are taking their toll and she's leaving after the Oct./Nov. issue. Sharpen your pencils and your desktop publishing skills and keep the largest bi women's publication in the country out there spreading the word.

And all that great conversation with friends will sharpen your wits to brainstorm new ideas to make BBWN bigger and better. In the works are fundraisers, a regional gathering, and more, but we need your help and energy.

No big commitments needed, but you know it's gonna be a long New England winter - so spend a few nights of it with your friends at BBWN!

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- Racism, sexism, homophobia - Recognize the Connections

### Coming in *Bi Women*:

The Theme for the August/September  
issue is

### Bodies and Body Images

How do you feel about your body  
and how do those feelings affect  
your self-image and self-esteem?  
How and why has your body  
image evolved over the years?  
What words do you use to describe  
your (or other people's) physical  
characteristics? Tell us about your  
fears, anxieties, triumphs,  
anecdotes and previously untold  
secrets on the subject.

DEADLINE: September 5, 1997

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Mac) or by e-mail (to [lindab@shore.net](mailto:lindab@shore.net) and  
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that you do not mind being listed as a  
contributor. You may contribute  
anonymously, or use just your first name.

BBWN is starting a World Wide Web page.  
Selected articles and excerpts from articles  
will be published on our Web page starting  
this spring. *If you do not want your work  
published on the Web, or would like to use  
a different name for a piece that would  
appear on the Internet, please let us know.*

Send articles, calendar entries, letters,  
black-and-white art, news and views to:

BiWomen  
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## Out for Summer:

# "Queer Progressive Organizing School" Gathers Grassroots Activists

by Linda Blair

I was lucky enough to spend this July 4 weekend at a conference center in a small town on Cape Cod meeting and learning about the work of other queer activists who share many of my political and social values.

Although the idea of gathering together with other queers who would also, according to the Queer Progressive Organizing School's email, "support a broad vision of social justice and liberation" appealed to me, I was skeptical. I wasn't at all convinced that I wanted to spend a long, summer holiday weekend in any "school", no matter how queer it was going to be. My only salvation was that maybe I could convince some of the other "students" to cut out early and sneak off to P'Town for some much needed extra-curricular activities. But what I got for "giving up" my long holiday weekend was *much* better.

I always figured there had to be lots of queers out there who, like me, believe that working for *our* rights inextricably is and *needs to be* linked with working for the rights of other minorities who live with discrimination and hatred against them every day. Well, I was right and through QPOS I got to meet, strategize and socialize with about thirty of them.

It seemed there were as many ways represented of making the connections between queer rights and other social or economic issues as there were QPOS participants. With about half the participants self-identifying as women and more than half as people of color or bi-racial, for many of us the links between prejudices we face based on our sexual orientation, gender and /or race were clear. For others, white men who might seemingly face few prejudices if they weren't queer, the desire to make these links were less obvious but no less heartfelt.

Of course, there was no monolithic vision or analysis among us. But there was plenty of common ground and shared beliefs on a whole host of issues on which to build. And build we did. The weekend was spent learning about and from each other. Workshop topics included "Bridging the Generation Gaps"; "Spirituality and Politics"; "Queers, Family Values and the Welfare Debate"; "Queers and Class"; "Queers and Immigration"; and "The Pros and Cons of Identity Politics." There was also a great theater

workshop which showed us ways to express our political and social commentary using sight and sound.

Lunches each day were spent listening to riveting and inspirational speakers. On Saturday, Graciela Sanchez, director of the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center, a community-based social justice/cultural arts organization in San Antonio, Texas, offered valuable ideas and examples on integrating work against racism, sexism, heterosexism and class elitism. On Sunday, QPOS participants were treated to the energetic eloquence of Elias Farajaje'-Jones, who lives in Berkeley, California and whose biography identifies him as a "Spanish-speaking afrikan native-american and an anarchist guerrilla theologian/AIDS terrorist/writer/cultural critic/performance artist/ritual technician/ two-spirit/ queer-identified bisexual man." Drawing from a seemingly endless base of knowledge on cultures near and far, ancient and contemporary, Elias inspired us with his words of wisdom and visions of an inclusive, just world.

As an activist, I often hear that "Diversity is Strength." I believe wholeheartedly that it's true, but also think that to fully realize that strength we've first got to learn about and appreciate each others lives. For me, the most valuable part of the QPOS weekend was the ample time spent listening to the concerns, fears, accomplishments, desires, visions and personal histories of its participants, each of whom embraced a different ethnic, racial, cultural, gender, class, sexual orientation or other identity different from my own. It is this sharing that builds the trust and foundations we need for those of us with diverse backgrounds to unite the progressive work we now pursue largely independent of one another. I was both greatly moved by the bravery it took for others to share their stories and truths openly and honestly, and thanked more than once for bringing a bi activist's perspective to the discussion.

We formed six work groups to plan and work together on various projects and have scheduled a potluck gathering for October to regroup and reassess. We're also going to publish a monthly calendar of events we are all working on as another way of maintaining contact with each other.

QPOS continues on page 10

### Queers in Ohio

We recently received a copy of the "Gay People's Chronicle: an Independent Chronicle of the Ohio Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Community." Subscription rates for this weekly newspaper are \$10 for 13 issues or \$20 for 25 issues. To subscribe send your name and address along with a check or money order to GPC, P.O. Box 5426, Cleveland, OH 44101.



### On-line Update

Current and back issues of *Bi Community News*, the national newsletter for UK bisexuals, is now available on-line at: <http://bi.org/~bcn/>. [Http://bi.org/](http://bi.org/) also provides a free Internet presence for bisexual individuals, groups and non-profit organizations. You can get the details on obtaining free World Wide Web space for your group at <http://bi.org/free.html>.



## Femme from page 1

The American Boyz is a mailing list for gender variant people of any orientation and those who support them; including but not limited to tom-boys, butches, f2ms, transmen, drag kings, intersexuals, and their SOs, friends, family, and allies. For more info send the message to <majordomo@netgsi.com> with 'info amboyz' in the body of a message. Or write to: P.O. Box 1118, Elkton, Md, 21922-1118. For more info about the group's True Spirit Conference, email: transman@tantalus.clark.net, or write to the American Boyz.



*TransSisters, The Journal of Transsexual Feminism*, bills itself as the "cutting edge of feminist journalism." Send \$7.50 for a sample issue, \$30 for a year's subscription (4 issues) or write for more information to Davina Anne Gabriel, 4004 Troost Avenue, Kansas City, Missouri 64110. Make checks out to Davina Anne Gabriel.

was a femme, and a femme who loved butch women. I learned that femmes are generally not weak, passive, frilly, or ditzzy (just as bis are not necessarily promiscuous, confused, AIDS-spreaders or swingers). I figured out that femme self-hatred is misogyny. I found that femme identity is based on innate gender expression. This, I recognized, was my particular essence, my gender core, that had prevented me from fitting in to the prescribed dyke androgyny no matter how closely I obeyed the lesbian fashion police. (Throw the question out at the next bi girls' gathering and watch the kettle boil over: why are most bi women femmes?)

Three years later my relationship with this woman ended and I was devastated. Two years later I celebrated the tenth anniversary of my coming out as bisexual with a formal dinner and ritual. I continued to shed my pseudo-dyke uniforms and decided it's okay to be the only woman in the bar wearing a skirt in the summer. It's a tough job, but someone's gotta do it!

I realized that many nineties femmes may look like dykes from 9-5 (well, we are!), then look more-straight-than-not at G/L/B/T events without changing clothes! That actually makes for some pretty queer gender expression, doesn't it?

Two years later I began dating Laurie, my first lover who identified loudly and proudly not only as butch, but as transgendered and lesbian. She loved my femme pride and I owe a huge amount of my awareness and critical thinking on gender issues to her, thanks to our endless fascinating conversations on the topic. I learned that the organized transgender community has grown from three or four lonesome courageous individuals at the March in '97 to the big and brazen Lavender Menace in '97.

As a bearded transvestite dyke, Laurie often passed as a man and we'd giggle over straight people's steadfast assumptions that we were a hetero couple. It had been years since I had experience straight couple privilege and it was a twi-

light-zone experience to be part of that when on a date with a woman.

Laurie honored my bisexuality and I honored her proud trans butchness. We often felt like poster girls for Bi-Trans Unity. She stood up for me to her separatist-lesbian friends who were disapproving of her dating a bi woman; I stood up for her when I heard trans-phobic remarks. We both know bisexuals and transgendered people are truly natural allies and need to celebrate and further develop our bonds in the community.

Two years and two butches later, I question my bisexuality again. I remember my earlier discovery of the difference between and sex, gender expression and genitalia. It had been with that discovery several years ago that I realized I was a femme exclusively attracted to butches, whether a butch man (which is your typical straight guy's gender presentation) or a butch woman. It was not someone's biological sex from birth but their gender expression that created or presented sexual chemistry for me. Although I was a bisexual, I was "monogenderal." Yes, you heard the work here first!

So why question my bisexuality? Because I have barely looked at a man in seven years, no matter how butch or feminist he may be. Could I still enjoy sex with a man, I asked myself? Sure, if I were in, say, Wyoming, and there wasn't a butch dyke anywhere within a thousand mile radius. (Come to think of it, there are probably dozens of cowbutches in Wyoming, out riding the ranges and plenty else).

So even though I only crave women, beautiful big, strong butches with crewcuts, ponytails, wads of keys, trucks, sport scars, starched white shirts, bravado, boots, BVD's, boxers, briefs or bikinis, and bouquets of flowers before shy, sweet faces, perhaps I'm still bisexual. After all, who but a bisexual would ever come up with a word like monogenderal and expect to be taken seriously?



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## Talk from page 1

Bisexuality can be seen as a component of (at least) two different sexuality classification schemes. The traditional classification scheme of heterosexual/homosexual/bisexual refers to, respectively, attraction to the "opposite" sex, the "same" sex, and both sexes. However, wouldn't it be just as reasonable to think of people as gynosexual/androssexual/bisexual, that is, attracted to women, men, or both?

Some transgendered people, when they transition, may shift from gynosexual to androssexual, yet remain homosexual or heterosexual (for example, a female-to-male transman that identified as a butch lesbian and now identifies as a gay man). Or, they may remain gynosexual or androssexual, and shift from heterosexual to homosexual or vice versa (for example, a male-to-female transsexual who previously identified as a heterosexual man and now identifies as a lesbian). The partners of transgendered people also must undergo a shift in identity (androssexual to gynosexual or vice versa, or homosexual to heterosexual or vice versa) — unless, that is, they are bisexual.

While there is a long tradition of butch/femme sexuality within lesbian culture (although, interestingly enough, not among gay men, where like tend to pair with like), we lack a more generalized conceptualization of attraction to feminine or masculine energy. How many people are attracted to both butch women and macho men, or to both femme women and effeminate men? While thinking about my panel presentation for the first femme conference, held recently in San Francisco, I came to coin a new identity for myself — "femmesexual" although probably "femmegenderal" would be a more accurate term. I am attracted to femme/feminine women and men. It's the femme part that matters to me — not whether their bodies are female or male.

Many bi women I know are "androgynogenderal" — that is, they are attracted to androgynous (that is, more feminine than average) men and androgynous (that is, more butch than average) women. Saying that they are bisexual — attracted to both women and men — is strictly true, but doesn't seem to capture the essence of their sexuality, since it is gender identity and presentation — not whether someone has a male or female body — that is the basis of their attraction.

Perhaps the reason there sometimes appears to be so much friction within "the bi community" is because we are using one label — "bisexual" — to describe a wide variety of more

subtle sexual orientations based on gender (and no doubt many other factors as well). Let's expand our sexual orientation vocabulary — femmesexual, butchgenderal, androssexual, gynosexual, androgynogenderal, homogenderal, bigenderal — so that we can name the whole universe of human sexual possibilities!

*Liz Highleyman is a writer and activist living in San Francisco.*

Psst....hey. Yah, you. The one with the newsletter in your hand.

I was wondering.....

Have YOU signed up to help organize the April 1998 Boston International Conference on Bisexuality yet?

With only 8 months to go before the conference we still have *over a dozen* conference coordinator positions to be filled.

Don't put it off a minute longer. Contact Wayne today at (508) 699-6612 or [bryant@tdint.com](mailto:bryant@tdint.com) to find out how YOU can get involved.

## Video Watch:

### *Different For Girls*

The Wellington, New Zealand, based newsletter "Bi-Lines" recently reviewed the movie *Different For Girls*. The film starts in the late 1970's at a boys' school in England where Prentice comes to the aid of Carl, an effeminate boy who is being harassed by the other boys. Then, in the present, the two schoolhood friends, who have lost touch, literally run into each other in a road accident. Prentice has difficulty recognizing his old friend because he is now a she. The two get to know each other again (with Prentice grappling with what this all means for him as a heterosexual), learn from and help each other, and eventually become lovers. Sounds like one worth searching the "foreign films" section for if you can find it.

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Book review:

New in Print:

Sex Changes: The  
Politics of  
Transgenderism

by Pat Califia

(Cleis Press, 1997)

Long known for her writings on sexuality, pornography and censorship, Pat Califia's latest work explores transgenderism, including interviews with both male-to-female and female-to-male transsexuals, explorations of feminism's resistance to transsexuals, the reaction of the religious right to the transsexual movement, and the history of transsexuality.

Look for the book in your local bookstore, or order directly from Cleis Press at 1-800-780-2279.

## *Switch Hitters: Lesbians write gay male erotica and gay men write lesbian erotica*

Edited by Carol Queen and Lawrence Schimel  
Cleis Press, 1996

reviewed by Debbie Block-Schwenk

When I heard about *Switch Hitters*, I knew I had to buy it and I felt that this exciting book should be reviewed for this newsletter. While I had originally wrote this review for the erotica issue, we didn't use it due to space constraints. For its experiments in gender, however, this book equally merits a review in this issue. It is a deeply bisexual book, in my opinion, because it reaches to the heart of what bisexuality means — that identities are fluid, that roles are fluid, that the gender of the body one happens to be born with neither defines your life nor limits your imagination. In *Switch Hitters*, the "gay" male writers are writing "lesbian" erotica and the "lesbian" female writers are writing "gay male" erotica (so that the stories are literally "trans-gender"). At least a couple of contributors to this anthology, including co-editor Carol Queen and local writer and publisher Cecilia Tan identify as bisexual, a fact that is stated but not emphasized in the book. With a name like *Switch Hitters*, however, the editors knew that bisexuals would not overlook this collection.

There are so many erotic, social and political issues that this ground-breaking book serves notice to simply by existing. As the introduction asks: "Does our erotic writing [as queer writers] speak more to questions of gender — the male body, the female body — or to questions of orientation? In cross-gender writing, do we explore different facets of eroticism and the erotic body than we

do when writing porn for our own gender? Do we perceive men and women (at least, queer men and queer women) as very different from one another?"

Women of all sexual orientations who find male-to-male erotica interesting are finally coming into the open around this and I attended a couple of fascinating discussions around this subject at Gaylaxicon (a queer science fiction convention) in July, 1996. The panelists, who ranged from openly queer authors to a straight woman who's made a career selling gay pornography under a male pseudonym, spoke of the energy they see in erotic encounters between men and of the power dynamic between men which, because they are each part of the dominant power group in society, makes a man's sexual surrender to another different from sex between two women or between a man and a woman.

On the other side of the "gender gap," co-editor Lawrence Schimel has commented that recruiting male authors for *Switch Hitters* was difficult since many older gay writers didn't see the point or the appeal of writing from a female perspective and the majority of male contributors are fairly young. Likewise, gay men that bought the book were reading only the gay male stories and ignoring the lesbian stories. The young male authors of these stories, however, obviously have picked up the vibe of the young queer woman of the nineties with very entertaining results, which bodes well for the future of the queer community.

While there was no difficulty in finding women interested in writing the male erotic tales, the editors found that most of the women who contributed are involved in the leather community and hence the majority of male stories have an S&M/B&D element. (One could write a huge tract on "roles" as they exist in the leather community, and how they relate — or, as it often seems, don't necessarily relate — to biological gender).

I don't know of many collections of erotica that have an introduction, but *Switch Hitters'* brief history of cross-gender and cross-orientation erotica writing was illuminating. Women have been writing erotica for gay male audiences (especially within the leather community) for a long time, while gay men spent relatively little

*Switch continues on page 8*



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# Gender Resource Guide

## National and International Resources

The International Foundation for Gender Education is located in Waltham, Massachusetts. IFGE has many resources on a wide variety of gender issues including: a walk-in and mail order bookstore; referral listings of trans support groups, services and medical care professionals worldwide; information on political activism regarding gender and a Crisis Hotline. Referrals or information: (617) 894-8340. Crisis Hotline (617) 899-2212.

The Intersexed Society of North America (ISNA) provides resources to individuals who were born with both male and female sex characteristics and who had genital altering surgery as infants or children in order to make them "fit in" as either male or female. ISNA helps intersexed people share their personal histories with each other and support each other. The group also works to draw public attention to the issue in order to stop further genital altering operations on infants and children.

## Local Support Groups

Enterprize is a support group for female to male transsexuals which holds weekly meetings in Boston. Info: (617) 441-5165.

The Tiffany Club of New England provides a support group to the crossdressing/transsexual community. Boston meetings are Tuesdays, 7 - 10 pm. Hotline: (617) 891-9325.

The Transgender Group of the Boston Gay and Lesbian Adolescent Services (GLASS) meets on Wednesdays at 5 pm. GLASS operates a community center for G/L/B/T/questioning adolescents and young adults age 13 - 25 at 93 Massachusetts Ave., Boston. Info: (617) 266-3349.

Transvestite Support Group (Connecticut). Info: P.O. Box 2281, Devon, CT 06460.

The 20 Club is a Hartford, CT support group for male to female transsexuals and their partners. Info: 20 Club, P.O. Box 387, Hartford, CT 06141-0387.

CT Outreach Society is a support group for crossdressers, transsexuals and their families in Farmington, CT. Info: (203) 657-4344.

## On the Internet

Albied Queer is a lesbian, transgender, bi, gay and supporters resource on the internet. Info: send email to: james\_e@iah.com

## Media

*Gendertalk* is a weekly Boston area radio program on gender issues with host Nancy Nangeroni and guests. There is a chance to call in with questions. WMBR 88.1 FM. Wednesdays 8:30 - 9:30 pm.

*Transgender Tapestry*, a magazine published by the International Foundation for Gender Education, includes articles, photo spreads, a directory of trans groups and listings of helping professionals. A years subscription costs \$40 and it is available at many queer bookstores as well as Borders and Barnes & Noble. Info: (617) 894-8340.

## Books

*S/he* by Minnie Bruce Pratt. Beautiful essays with gender themes by this brilliant feminist lesbian femme activist.

*Transgender Warriors* by Leslie Feinberg. Essays on transgendered people throughout history by the author of the classic novel *Stone Butch Blues*.

*The Persistent Desire, A Femme-Butch Reader*. Edited by Joan Nestle, a comprehensive and inspiring book on femme-butches lives and identities, full of essays, interviews, fiction and poetry.

*A Restricted Country*. Essays by Joan Nestle. Many of her very political, very personal essays reflect femme-butch culture and history.

Check the sidebars throughout this issue for more resources.

(Thanks to Liz Nania for contributing some of these resource listings).



"In Your Face" is a newsletter outlining political activism against gender oppression. Its mission includes coverage of "all actions related to overthrowing gender oppression, transphobia, genderphobia, homophobia or any other political structure which oppresses us." You can reach them at IYF c/o Riki Anne Wilchins, 274 W. 11 St., NYC 10014, e-mail Riki@pipeline.com. They have a web page at <http://www.cdspub.com> and list many contact people around the country. In Boston, contact Nancy Nangeroni, NRN@world.std.com, 617-497-6928.



The Center for Gender Sanity can provide counseling and advice to transsexuals and their employers in dealing with the transition process and on general gender education issues. For more information, contact them at Center for Gender Sanity, P.O. Box 451427, Westchester, CA 90045, (310) 670-2222, e-mail merkin77@aol.com.

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**"Transsexual Portraits"**  
Documents FTM Transformation

The recently published book "Body Alchemy: Transsexual Portraits" by Loren Cameron, a female to male transsexual and photographer, is according to Patricia Holt of the San Francisco Examiner, a "poignant ... sensitive and insightful" photo documentary of female-to-male transsexuals (FTMs). Published by Cleis Press, the book documents several FTMs experiences including photos of genitals in transformation, before and after shots and the thoughts of those photographed. "Transsexual Portraits" also documents Cameron's own transformation, his personal insights and experiences as well as pictures of his strong, masculine and tattooed body. The book is available for \$24.95 in bookstores or from Cleis press by calling 800-780-2279.

**Switch** from page 6

time writing erotica for women but often did have to write "lesbian" scenes if they were writing porn for a straight audience, as some gay writers did to pay the bills (one of these, a scene from *Boss Lady in Bondage*, published pseudonymously by gay S/M writer Larry Townsend in 1971, is included in the book, and is about what you'd expect for a book of that era—although a man does *not* walk in in the middle and monopolize the women). The introduction also brings up the deep and important questions about sexuality and gender this sort of writing poses.

And the articulate introduction makes me think about my sexual fantasy life, as well as about the authors': What does it mean that I'm excited by a story featuring women but written by a man? Or featuring men and written by a woman? Would I react differently if I didn't know the gender of the writer? What does it mean that that male author is gay and may never have actually touched a woman intimately? What does it mean for a gay male writer to have to convey "lesbian" intimacy and sex? If writing that sex scene arouses him, is he really "gay?" Are the women in his story "women" to him? If not, what "gender" are they? Unlike many erotica collections, this one is truly food for thought and not just nourishment for the libido.

While the stories are arranged with alternating "lesbian" and "gay" content, I'll comment on the "lesbian" stories first. "I Fucked a Girl" by Matthew Rettenmund opens the book with a fun coming out story about a modern twenty-something woman who finds the saucy waitress at the local diner more appealing than her egotistical boyfriend. "Cowgrrrl in the Darkke" by Thomas Roche presents a slightly parodic look at goth culture within the context of a sex club encounter between a Male-to-Female transsexual and a dildo-packing "cowgrrrl" that covers enough positions and variations to leave the question of what two women do in bed quite securely answered. "The Pussy Pier" by William Mann captures very well the changing sexual attitudes between the different generations of lesbians as an older lesbian learns a few things about sexual freedom from her


younger friends during a summer vacation in P-town.

The two standouts among the "lesbian" stories in my opinion are "Dry Run" by Lawrence Schimel and "100% Natural" by D. Travers Scott. In "Dry Run," Erica's biological clock goes off with a vengeance and she is suddenly erotically obsessed with the accouterments of lesbian motherhood—diapers, cribs, and turkey basters. Erica's partner Sui Mon takes her through a "dry run" at baby-making, with intensely erotic results. In "100% Natural," body-pierced Bek overcomes her aversion to "granola dykes" when she encounters a sexy woman with coal-black hair in the restroom of the movie theater where Bek works. Things get even hotter and heavier when "coal's" butch partner walks in on them. Another note I liked about this story was that the lesbian couple has children, a nice touch of realism that convincingly gets in the way of Bek's appetites.


Next the "gay male" stories. Carole Queen heads up this line-up with "Poster Boy," in which a gay "poster boy" has his first anal sex experiences courtesy of a couple of mail-order dildos. "Posing" by Blake C. Aarens was my favorite of these stories, describing an encounter between two African-American men, one a student in an art class, the other a model posing for the class. The elements of race, of discussing safe sex, and the tentative affection between the two men added nice elements to this really hot story. Cecilia Tan contributes "Daydreaming" about a budding gay college student and the power of fantasy. "In Heat" by Lucy Taylor uses loss and alienation to inspire her protagonist into a fiery encounter with a man he meets on the beach—a man who's dealing with his own losses.

The remainder of the "gay male" stories have some sort of kinky bent to them (as mentioned above), and if you are not interested in this kind of scene, they might be better skipped. On the other hand, they were definitely an eye-opening experience and I had to read some of them twice—once to get through the content and a second time to understand the erotic responses of the characters. Of them all, I found "Dress Leathers" by Robin Sweeny to be the most notable, intermingling a "Daddy's" disciplining of his "boy" with his incredibly poignant memories of the friends and lovers he's lost to AIDS. The consensual violence of the S&M scene is contrasted to the narrator's pain at the unconsensual violence of life: "The only way I'm ever going to feel better through any of this is to make someone hurt on the outside as

**Switch** continues on page 10



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# OH, THAT SCARY ANN HECHE

by Robyn Ochs

Like most of my lesbian and bi women friends, I have been an avid follower of the stories of both Ellen Morgan and Ellen DeGeneres. It's all been quite exciting, and I've been right there on the sidelines, cheering, and writing my letters of support to corporate sponsors and disappointment to non sponsors. I am pleased overall by the way the media has covered the coming out of the (real) Ellen DeGeneres and the (fictional) Ellen Morgan. But I'm not entirely comfortable by the coverage given to Anne Heche and her sudden conversion to "Ellen-ism".

It seems that people are more disturbed by Heche's sudden "conversion" than they are by Ellen's born-that-way lesbianism. Apparently, Oprah and her followers were so unsettled by Anne Heche's disclosure of her sudden, unprecedented and unexpected attraction to Ellen, given her history of heterosexuality (including two years with actor Steve Martin) that Oprah dedicated her May 5 show to the subject, focusing on the old nature/nurture question, and whether it is possible for someone to suddenly turn gay. Oprah brought in a roster of heavy hitters: lots of scientists, historians and professional queers, including science writer Chandler Burr, historian Jonathan Ned Katz, lesbian-sexpert-and-a-longtime-poster-lesbian-now-in-love-with-a-man Joann Loulan, and Advocate editor Judy Weider. There was no consensus of opinion here, but what did come up is that studies are pointing toward a partial correlation between biological and/or genetic factors and sexual orientation for men, but not for women. As Chandler Burr stated: "Women are much more biologically complex." The words fluid and continuum came up more than once to describe women's sexuality. Surprisingly, given the nature of the discussion, the word bisexual was mentioned only once, when Oprah asked Loulan if she was one, and

Loulan more or less said she wasn't, just a lesbian in love with a man.

But back to Anne Heche. All sorts of conclusions are being drawn about her identity and decision to come out about her love for Ellen DeGeneres. Richard Goldstein opined in the Village Voice (5/6/97), "Only in an age of Pentecostal urges could it seem credible for a woman who has never felt a twinge of queer desire to be sexually born again. Yet, that's what Heche professes. She's in love with DeGeneres, but there's been no awakening; it just fell out of the blue, like being touched by an angel or in this case, perhaps, an agent... Her handlers had to come up with the ultimate Hollywood spin, and they did: 'She's out, but not gay; she tells, but not all...'"

Just what is it that he is accusing Heche of not telling us? Goldstein continues, "Heche is betting that, if she dangles the promise of availability by insisting she never had a lesbian encounter before Ellen, and implying that her next lover could be a man, she will embody enough of the traditional fantasy to lure us into the brave new world. So what if this scenario plays to the most benighted ideas about gay recruiting? So what if it reinvents the closet in the guise of candor. Speaking truth to power is one thing, but why bite the beast that feeds you?"

Heche continues on page 10

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Transgender retreats and B&B

Kindred Spirits sponsors retreats and workshops for transgendered individuals throughout the year. A retreat entitled "Dilemmas of Bisexuality" is scheduled for June 27-29, 1997. They've also recently acquired a Bed and Breakfast, open year-round, including six special weekend mini-retreats. For more information contact Kindred Spirits, P.O. Box 18332, Asheville, NC 28814. Phone 704-253-9882.

## QPOS from page 3

QPOS organizers from the Bromfield Street Education Foundation, which also organizes the annual OutWrite Conference and publishes *Gay Community News (GCN)*, hope to have another 3 day "school" in 1998 for other queer progressive organizers interested in joining in the process of unifying our work toward social and economic justice.

For information on QPOS activities or events, contact the Bromfield Street Education Foundation at (617) 262-6969.



## Switch from page 8

much as I hurt on the inside." The relationship between the narrator and his lovers (living and dead) is complex, and I learned a lot from this piece. The brief introductions to each story will help the faint-hearted to steer away from these intense and (to my tastes) often disturbing selections.

All in all, *Switch Hitters* covers a lot of ground and has something for everyone. I found it was great to be able to flip from sexy encounters between two men to hot scenes with two women (or vice versa) in seconds. The stories were almost universally well written and the characters in most were real people whose erotic encounters were natural expressions of their lives and desires. *Switch Hitters* is definitely worth a read or two and the publisher, editors and contributors should all be congratulated on putting such a queer work on the shelves.

## Heche from page 9

Goldstein is hinting that Heches' intentions may be less than honorable. Is she lying about never having been attracted to a woman? Is she really a straight actress seeking publicity by pretending to be in love with Ellen? Is she really a lesbian who is playing ambiguous because it's safer? Did she invent the whole scenario to promote her own career? Why is it so hard for Goldstein to believe that she might actually be telling us her truth?

Another interesting theme in the print media is the question of whether it will be possible for Heche to remain credible as an actor now that it is known that she is in love with a woman. One would almost think that at the moment of coming out as a woman in love with another woman, one negates one's entire history. "Everything that happened before today no longer counts." But while the reality is that for some of us our histories prior to coming out feel false, scripted roles that we were acting out before arriving at our current and much better-fitting awareness and identities, for others our past *does* count, *is* meaningful, and *does* inform our current identities. The reality is that there are more choices than just gay or straight. Some of us may fall somewhere nearer the middle of the Kinsey scale and *still* choose to be out and to publicly declare our queer identities. I'm one of those: a public, out, proud, loud and queer bisexual.

So here's something else that really upsets me: In all of these discussions, what in the world happened to the word bisexual? Why has that word been so consistently avoided? Anne Heche is being read by most people as a born-again lesbian. And she may be. But then again she may not. She may be bisexual, or she may choose not to label at all. She hasn't told us. What she did say on Oprah was "I didn't all of a sudden feel that I'm gay... I didn't feel all of a sudden an epiphany...the only epiphany I had is that I'm in love with Ellen" (5/7/97).

Anne Heche is not in love with all women, she's in love with Ellen DeGeneres. After all, it's individual, real people we fall in love with, not entire sexes. Let's celebrate this love that she and Ellen DeGeneres have found, and let's all respect Anne Heche's right to define her own identity, in her own sweet time. After all, it has only been a couple of months since she met Ellen. I think she's very brave.

An earlier version of this essay appeared on May 16, 1997 in the *Gay Peoples' Chronicle*.

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**September 5 ♦ Friday**

**Bi Women submissions deadline.** The theme is "Bodies and Body Images." How do you feel about your body and how do those feelings affect your self-image and self-esteem? How and why has your body image evolved over the years? What words do you use to describe your (or other people's) physical characteristics? (Femme, butch, androgynous, fit, fat, tall, short, disabled, sexy, muscular, geeky, cute, "drop-dead gorgeous," etc.) Tell us about your fears, anxieties, triumphs, anecdotes and previously untold secrets on the subject. Send articles (on any topic), calendar entries, letters, black-and-white art, news and views to: BiWomen, P.O. Box 639, Cambridge, MA 02140 or email text only (not images) to both [lindab@shore.net](mailto:lindab@shore.net) and [starfurry@worldnet.att.net](mailto:starfurry@worldnet.att.net).

**September 7 ♦ Sunday**

**BBWN Potluck Brunch.** 11 a.m. at Fennel's in Brookline. Come celebrate the last brunch of the summer by sharing succulent food with succulent women. Near Coolidge Corner on the C branch of the green line. Call Fennel at (617) 734-4636 for directions. All women welcome.



**Bi Space.** 7-9 p.m. A friendly discussion space to meet other bisexuals and talk about bisexual issues. The first hour's topic will be "My secret life". A \$2 donation is requested to help pay for rental of the space. BiSpace is at the Bisexual Resource Center at 29 Stanhope St. in Boston.

**September 10 ♦ Wednesday**

**BBWN Introductory Meeting.** A safe space for women to connect with the bisexual community. 7:30 p.m.- 9 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46

**BiWomen Subscription Form**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE (Optional) \_\_\_\_\_

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SUBSCRIPTION RATE (sliding scale)

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THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

BBWN

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Pleasant St., Cambridge. Info: (617) 354-8807.

**Bisexual Resource Center Board Meeting,** 7-9 p.m. (see August 13th)

**September 11 ♦ Thursday**

**Bi Married Women's Support Group,** 7-9 p.m. (see August 14th)

**September 12 ♦ Friday**

**Bi Coffee House,** 7:30 p.m. A great opportunity to relax and unwind with friends new and old. Meet at the Casual Cup, 1362 Beacon Street, Brookline. Nearest T stop is Coolidge Corner, on the C branch of the Green Line.

**September 13 ♦ Saturday**

**Biversity Video Night,** at Morgan's in Somerville at 5 p.m. Tonight's featured film will be *The Abyss*. Call Morgan at (617) 625-5966 to R.S.V.P. and for directions. Drinks or snacks to share appreciated.

**September 16 ♦ Tuesday**

**Coming Out as Bisexual.** 7-9 p.m.. (see August 6th)

**Bi Women's Rap,** 7:30 p.m. (see August 5th)

**September 19 - 21 ♦ Friday - Sunday**

**The 1997 Autumn Gender-Free Dance Camp** in Beckett, Mass. Sponsored by the Lavender Country and Folk Dancers. A weekend of dance, song, music and recreational activities (hiking, swimming, etc.) in a secluded, rural setting. All are welcome to come and be themselves. No partner or previous dance experience necessary. Cost: \$140 members/\$160 non-members. (\$10 less if you register by Aug. 15) includes meals and lodging. Info: Chris Ricciotti at (617) 522-1115 or 1-800-523-3123, code 23 or send email to [LCFD@aol.com](mailto:LCFD@aol.com).

**September 20 ♦ Saturday**

**Biversity Brunch and Planning Meeting,** 11:30 am. at Johnny D's on Holland St. in Davis Square, Somerville. The Davis stop on the Red Line is just across the street. Immediately after the brunch the group will meet to plan its October/November calendar of events.

**Yard Sale** to benefit the Network for Battered Lesbians and Bisexual Women. 10 a.m. at the Old Cambridge Baptist Church, 1151 Mass. Ave., Cambridge. Nearest T stop is Harvard on the Red Line. Donated items welcome. Info: (617) 424-8611.

**September 28 ♦ Sunday**

**Biversity Brunch,** 1 p.m.. Come check out a new Biversity brunch location at The Skewers, 92 Mt. Auburn St. in Harvard Square, Cambridge. Nearest T stop is Harvard on the Red Line.

**September 30 ♦ Tuesday**

**BBWN Dinner,** 6 p.m. Join us for pizza or pasta and those fabulous hot rolls at Bertucci's, 49 Stanhope St., Boston. After dinner, we'll walk next door to the Bi Office to get out the next issue of *BiWomen*.

**BBWN newsletter mailing,** 7-9 p.m. at the Bi Office. What could be better than to spend the evening with a roomful of wonderful bi and bi-friendly women for a good cause. The more hands the better so come help get *BiWomen* out. You'll be glad you did.

**The Bisexual Resource Center Needs YOU...**

to help organize the **5th International Conference on Bisexuality**, to be held in Boston in 1998.



Please get involved *now* to make this event a success!

**For more information or to volunteer, call or email Wayne at (508) 699-6612 or [bryant@tdint.com](mailto:bryant@tdint.com)**

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## The "Bi Office"

is the Bisexual Resource Center, located at 29-33 Stanhope Street, behind Club Cafe' and right next door to Bertucci's. For info call (617) 424-9595.

## Ongoing Events

### 1st & 3rd Tuesdays:

**Bi Women's Rap**, 7:30 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St, Cambridge. For info and discussion topics call (617) 354-8807.

### Wednesdays:

**Say It, Sister!** radio show on WMBR 88.1 FM (first on your FM dial!). 7:30-8:30pm. Info and topics: (617) 253-8810.

### 3rd Thursdays:

**GLBisexual Speakers Bureau Meeting**, 8pm, at the Boston Living Center, 29-33 Stanhope Street, Boston (in the same building as the bi office). Wheelchair accessible. General meeting at 6:45pm with the theme program starting at 8pm. Info: (617) 354-0133.

### Saturdays:

**Lavender Country Dance Group**, 8-11pm, beginners lesson 7:30. Smoke- and alcohol-free. Open to all gays, lesbians, bisexuals and their friends. First Church of Jamaica Plain, corner Centre and Eliot Sts., JP. On MBTA Green and Orange lines. \$5. Info: Janet, (617) 522-2216.

# CALENDAR

## August 1 - 3 ♦ Friday - Sunday

**BiCamp**. Bis and their friends from around the Northeast and beyond will be gathering for fun in the sun at the Red Mill Brook campground in southern VT. Sponsored by Biversity Boston, the mixed gender bisexual network of Greater Boston. Registration is filled.

## August 3 ♦ Sunday

**Bi Space**. This regularly scheduled Biversity Boston event is cancelled for this month.

## August 5 ♦ Tuesday

**Bi Women's Rap**, 7:30 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St, Cambridge. This weeks discussion topic is "Creative Coming Out." Info: (617) 354-8807.

## August 6 ♦ Wednesday

**Coming Out as Bisexual**. An informal support group for people who think they may be bisexual or attracted to more than one gender. 7-9 p.m. at the Bi Office. A small donation is requested to help pay for the space. Sponsored by the Bisexual Resource Center. Info (617) 424-9595.

## August 8 - 10 ♦ Friday - Sunday

**The Hero's Journey: The 3rd Annual All-FTM Conference of the Americas** for all FTMs (female to males) and their partners and friends will take place in Boston. Some workshops include Coming Out, Sexuality, Parents of FTMs Panel, FTMs as Parents Panel and Finding a Partner. Featured speakers include author Leslie Feinberg and Michael Kirk of Enterprize. Cost for the 2 1/2 day conference is \$60 before July 31; \$75 afterwards. Info: (617) 639-7968 or <IFGE@worldnet.att.net>.

## August 9 ♦ Saturday

**BBWN Potluck Brunch** at noon. Join us for food and fun at Ananda and Amy's in Somerville. T accessible. For directions call (617) 776-1008. All women welcome.

## August 10 ♦ Sunday

**Biversity Boston Outing to Singing Beach** in Manchester-by-the-Sea. Meet on the North Station commuter rail platform at noon to catch the 12:15 p.m. train. Train costs \$3.50 each way.

## August 12 ♦ Tuesday

**Speaking Out Call-in Show**. Local bi activist and author Wayne Bryant will be the featured guest on *Speaking Out* at 8:30 a.m. on Boston cable t.v. channel 24. Call 973-4848 with your questions and comments on the topic of "Bisexual Characters in Film".



## August 13 ♦ Wednesday

**Bisexual Resource Center Board Meeting**, 7-9 p.m. The BRC board meets monthly to work on educational programs, the 1998 international conference, fundraising and many other issues. All bi and bi-friendly people are welcome to attend.

## August 14 ♦ Thursday

**Bi Married Women's Support Group**, 7-9 p.m. at the Bi Office. If you are a bi woman married to or in a relationship with a man and interested in talking with others who are, please join us! Call Debbie at (617) 731-9060 for more info.

## August 16 ♦ Saturday

**Biversity Brunch** 11:00 a.m. at the Blue Diner on Kneeland Street (between South St. and Utica St.) in Boston. Nearest T stop is South Station on the Red Line.

**Biversity Outing to the Randolph Country Club** following brunch. Meet at the Blue Diner on Kneeland Street to car-pool to this G/L/B country club south of Boston. Swimming, dancing, lounging and more.

## August 17 ♦ Sunday

**Biversity Video Night** at Morganne's in Somerville. Gather at 5 p.m. to watch the classic movies *Maverick* and *Victor/Victoria*. Call Morganne at (617) 625-5966 to R.S.V.P. and for directions. Food contributions welcome.

## August 19 ♦ Tuesday

**Coming Out as Bisexual**. 7-9 p.m. (see August 6th)  
**Bi Women's Rap**, 7:30 p.m. (see August 5th). Topic: "Bisexual Bodies."

## August 20 ♦ Wednesday

**BBWN Planning Meeting**, 7-9 p.m. at the Bi Office. Here's your big chance to get involved - or reinvolved - in your community! Participation has waned lately, but September is just around the corner and we need you to make things happen. Come help BBWN get started on an activity-pact fall.

Save the



Date!

## August 31 ♦ Sunday

**Biversity Brunch**, 1 p.m. Enjoy the fine food and good company at Skipjack's on Route 9 near Brookline Village. The Brookline Village stop on the D Branch of the Green Line is just yards away.

## September 2 ♦ Tuesday

**Bi Women's Rap**, 7:30 p.m. (see August 5th)

## September 3 ♦ Wednesday

**Coming Out as Bisexual**. 7-9 p.m. (see August 6th)

**CALENDAR** continues on page 11



## Body Image

### Hidden Invitation to Play

by [REDACTED]

Most of us are probably aware of the challenges of invisible identities, a challenge made more pronounced by the difficulty of manifesting some elements of our identities publicly (without getting arrested, anyway). For those of us who have an outward appearance of some conventionality, the presumptions can become particularly annoying. I'm quite femme (dresses, long hair, earrings, that sort of thing) and I live with a man, so the standard assumption is that I'm heterosexual and monogamous. Because I don't show marks or wear handcuffs on my belt, I'm presumed vanilla.

Actually none of this is always true. In cities -- okay, in New York -- these presumptions are seldom a problem. The kind of women who make my stomach flip over -- androgynous and with serious Attitude -- are common there, and they return my eye contact. I can walk around with my boyfriend and still flirt with women, just as he can be with me and still garner substantial (and well-deserved) male attention. Clearly we "read" differently there, perhaps because there are fewer presuppositions and a greater erotic fluidity.

Now, however, we live in a tiny, conservative Pennsylvania town, where I teach at an even tinier and only slightly less conservative college. There are a few gay and lesbian faculty and staff members who are out, but not many; there is nothing resembling a larger queer community. (And "queer," which messes with the very notion of identity, is the identity with which I'm most comfortable - where else does a polyamorous bisexual masochist fit?) My professional position is tenuous, and I haven't been willing to come out yet. This is largely because I wouldn't want to start the process and then immediately return to lying actively -- to come out, say, as bi, but deny my non-monogamy or various kinks. It's also because the size of the college and town create a fishbowl effect, and I'd just as soon not have all of my students speculating about the exact details of my erotic and romantic lives. At the same time, to

**Invitation** continues on page 10



Laura "Timberwolf" Sachs, a nice Jewish girl, beaming her Native American spiritual self, Christmas Eve, 1996. "One spiritual size, LOVE, fits all."

PHOTO: ALAN HAMILTON

### Her Hair Today... Still Hair Tomorrow

by Laura L. Sachs

Yes, I am a woman with a beard. If you are feeling confused, embarrassed, afraid, curious, attracted, intrigued; or are not quite sure how to appropriately respond, owner of beard happy to answer any questions respectfully posed...

In case you are unaware, please let me be the first to inform you: Women have hair! I realize you are shocked, stunned into speechlessness even! I'm not just talking about under the arms, down the tummy and over-the-pussy-we-go-all-the-way-down-our-legs-to-the-tops-of-our-cute-little-toes! I'm talking about, "... YES, by the hairs of my chinny-chin chin!"

December 8, 1996, I stopped shaving. I had contemplated letting my hairs grow free in the past. Then, usually after a few days, I would regretfully take razor in hand and...

**Hair** continues on page 6

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### Volunteers of the Month

Ellyn  
Deveane  
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Linda Blair  
Deborah Levine  
Lynne Levine  
Lynn Rosenbaum  
Cori DeSaulnier

Rosalie

Lucy

Robyn Ochs

Kate Griffin

*And many more  
wonderful  
women! You  
know who you  
are! Thank you,  
thank you, thank  
you!*

Thanks again!

BiWomen is published  
bi-monthly.

Editorial Team for this  
issue of BiWomen:

Linda Blair

Debbie Block-Schwenk

Ellyn Ruthstrom

Printed on  
recycled paper

*The Boston Bisexual Women's Network is a feminist, not-for-profit collective organization whose purpose is to bring women together for support and validation. It is meant to be a safe environment in which women of all sexual self-identities, class backgrounds, racial, ethnic and religious groups, ages, abilities and disabilities are welcome. Through the vehicles of discussion, support, education, outreach, political action and social groups related to bisexuality, we are committed to the goals of full acceptance as bisexuals within the gay and lesbian community, and to full acceptance of bisexuality and the liberation of all gay people within the larger society.*



Please provide submissions on paper (typed or handwritten), on disk (PC or Mac) or by e-mail to lindab@shore.net and eruthstr@lesley.edu. Please submit only text by e-mail. We cannot accept your art or photos electronically. Include your name and phone number if possible.

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Send articles, calendar entries, letters, black-and-white art, news and views to:

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### Upcoming Themes:

**February/March:**

*Fiction*

**April/May:**

*International Bis*

**June/July:**

*Sports & Hobbies:*

*The Swimsuit Issue*

### Coming in *Bi Women*:

The Theme for the December /

January issue is:

### Spiritual Journeys

What kind of spiritual journeys have you taken? Has your sexuality played a part? Has your journey been solitary or with others? What traditions do you draw upon: Ancient, modern, feminist, personal?

DEADLINE: October 31, 1997

### August 20th BBWN Planning Committee Minutes

Present: Linda, Deb, Ellyn, [REDACTED]

The major discussion of the night was concerning the newsletter. Deb is going to let go of her co-editorship of the newsletter, but will help train new people and will continue to write for the publication. [REDACTED] is a new volunteer and said she is very eager to help on the newsletter. Ellyn also said she is interested in co-editing the newsletter.

The group went over possible articles for the Body Image issue and agreed to meet on Sunday, September 7 to work on that issue together. The group brain-stormed on theme ideas for the next four issues (see Upcoming Themes on this page).

The next topic was the International Bi Conference that is being sponsored by BRC in Boston on April 5-7, 1998. It was suggested that BBWN sponsor a bi women's event on one of the afternoons or evenings. Suggestions were: dance party, cocktail/reception, or brunch. After discussion, the idea that made the most sense was the cocktail/reception and we could have an element of networking as part of the gathering.

The next planning meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 15 at the Boston Living Center.

All articles and art appearing in this newsletter are copyrighted by the authors and artists.



# 5th International Bisexual Conference (IBC5) "One World, Many Faces"

## CALL FOR PRESENTATIONS

The 5th International Bisexual Conference (IBC5) will take place in Boston, Massachusetts on April 3, 4, and 5, 1998. The IBC5 conference theme is "One World, Many Faces: Unity and Diversity in Bi Communities, Queer Communities, and the World."

We are currently seeking proposals for presentations, papers, panel discussions, performances, and workshops in the following subject tracks: Activism, Organizing, Youth/Students, Writers/Literature, Media/Culture, Relationships, Gender, Research/Theory, Bisexual History, Spirituality, Safer Sex/HIV, Personal Growth, Sexuality, Computer/Internet, Non-Bi Partners/Families, Performance, Film and Video, Our Bodies: Differing Ability, Health, Image and Global/Regional/Racial/Cultural/Class Differences.

The official language of the conference will be English; however, sessions in Spanish are encouraged and other languages will be considered. If you would like to present your session in a language other than English, please include that information in your proposal. The deadline for proposals is February 1, 1998. Send completed forms to: IBC5 Call for Papers, P.O. Box 639, Cambridge MA, 02140 USA.

Alternatively, you may submit proposal forms electronically by sending them to [presentations@biconf.org](mailto:presentations@biconf.org). This address can also be used to contact the program coordinator. Further information about the conference can be found on the worldwide web at <http://www.biconf.org>.

Session proposals should include the title, intended audience, a description for the conference brochure (25 to 50 words), the submitter's name, affiliation, and contact information, information on other presenters (if applicable), presentation content, format, and a brief outline.



The Bi Conference still needs volunteers! From the large to the very small, there are ways to help out and connect with the bi community here and around the world. Contact Wayne at (508) 699-6612 or at [bryant@tdint.com](mailto:bryant@tdint.com) to find out how you can get involved.

## Thank You, Debbie!

by Linda Blair

For everyone at BBWN, I want to give a *big* thanks to "retiring" co-editor Debbie Block-Schwenk for her fantastic and tireless efforts to make *BiWomen* a success over the past two years.

When Debbie and I inherited the job of editing *BiWomen* from ace editor and professional graphic designer Kathleen Hepburn in the fall of 1995, we knew we had our work cut out for us. With little hands-on experience, we rolled up our sleeves and dove in, learning a little more with each new issue.

From day one, Debbie was always coming up with new and interesting ideas to pursue - a great idea for someone to interview; books and movies to review that would fit perfectly with the next issue's theme; sifting through stacks of magazines, newsletters, and mailings or surfing the Web to find just the right juicy bi tidbits or resources that *BiWomen* readers would want to know about or might find useful.

Although editing and producing a newsletter together can present countless hurdles to developing a friendship, nothing could have been further from that reality for Debbie and I. Although rarely stress-free, the process of creating each new issue together has offered many valuable opportunities to get to know each other better, develop trust and foster a close friendship. Although I know I'll miss our newsletter "brainstorming" phone chats, pre-production week discussions and last minute check-ins, I know that all of those hours of working together has helped to seal a friendship that won't soon fade.

The Steering Committee, volunteers and active BBWN members want to wish Debbie the best of luck with her *fabulous* (and demanding) new job and in pursuing her art and passion as a writer. We all look forward to reading your excellent book and movie reviews, fiction and other articles in future issues of *BiWomen*.

## IBC5 Travel Fund Established

If you wish to contribute to the International Travel Fund Account for the 5th International Bisexual Conference in April, you can do this in two ways.

1) Send a check made out to "BiNet USA International Fund". In order to not have the check held for 30 days, please send checks in US funds only; if possible, the check should be drawn from a US bank -- preferably Citibank.

Send checks to Stephanie Berger, 4231 Montgomery Street, Oakland, CA 94611.

2) You can electronically transfer funds into the account. Again, we strongly encourage that you draw from a US bank (preferably Citibank) and in US funds. If this is not possible, funds are likely to be held for 30 days.

The information you need is as follows: Citibank, FSB - account # 66701783 Citibank, FSB- Branch # 902 Citibank, FSB Routing # 254070116.

If you transfer funds electronically, please send an e-mail to [virago@slip.net](mailto:virago@slip.net) or a letter to the above address with the your full name, amount, currency, date of transaction, and bank of origin, so we can keep a clear record of the transaction.



## Body Image Resources

**NAAFA: National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance, Inc.** P.O. Box 188620, Sacramento, CA 95818 (800) 442-1214. <http://naafa.org>. Advocacy group. Membership newsletter, educational materials, regional chapters, annual convention, pen-pal program.

**Largesse: The Network for Size Esteem.** P.O. Box 9404, New Haven, CT 06534 (203) 787-1624. Information clearinghouse for size diversity empowerment. Database, archives, support material, quarterly newsletter, bi-monthly bulletin.

**Largely Positive.** P.O. Box 17223, Glendale, WI 53217. Promotes health and self-esteem for larger people. Quarterly newsletter, workshops, local support groups, assistance with starting a support group.



## FILM REVIEW: Female Perversions

by Ellyn Ruthstrom

*Female Perversions* is an incredible feminist film with a bisexual woman as its central character. The film focuses on Eve (Tilda Swinton), a prominent attorney slated to be appointed to a judgeship. When her sister Madelyn, an academic, is arrested for shoplifting, she asks Eve for help. Madelyn spends the weekend in jail, while Eve stays in Madelyn's room in the desert and meets her sister's friends Emma (Laila Robins), who runs a bridal shop; Emma's intensely unfeminine teenage daughter, Edwina, who is always called Ed (Dale Shuger); and Anunciata (Frances Fisher), a stripper.

One of the first scenes of the film is of Eve addressing the jury in court. She is articulate, fully composed and very precise with her appearance and her speech. The camera alternately focuses on her lips, her low cut blouse, the slit in her short skirt, and her clenched fist as she pounds it emphatically into her opened palm. Interspersed are shots of the various men in the court — other lawyers, the judge, the police officers — as they ogle her and get worked up by watching her pulsing fist movement. We can see by her professionalism why the governor is considering her. She knows her stuff. But she also, knows how to work "her stuff" in age-old feminine ways, or shall we say in "perverse" ways.

Eve has beauty and intelligence, but she feels that she needs to balance her use of both to acquire and hold on to the power she desires. Director Susan Striefeld uses the image of the tightrope walker to illustrate Eve's dilemma. Eve doodles tightrope walkers when she is on the phone; the image comes to her in bed when she is about to orgasm, and when she sleeps — though she swears she never dreams. The image is of a woman wrapped in a gauzy material, with half exposed breasts and ropes entwined around her middle and her limbs. As she tries to cross the tightrope, hands from somewhere pull on the ropes and try to make her fall off. There is also the image of the classic Greek king, a strong symbol of patriarchy that is watching and judging all of her movements.

The themes of Power and Beauty are repeated throughout the film. Eve pages through a women's fashion magazine and we see an ad with the bold message: "Forgive me for being powerful." Even though her appointment to the judge-

ship appears to be a shoe-in and her professional life is set, Eve still worries about being unseated. She becomes the evil stepmother from *Sleeping Beauty* when she asks the mirror who is the fairest of them all. And Eve's own mind taunts her that the younger woman who is set to replace her at the firm, played by the model Paulina Porizkova, is now the fairest. Second best is not good enough for Type A Eve.

Her sex life reflects her struggle with power as well. She and her lover, John, seem to vie for attention from each other as they both juggle free time around their very busy professional lives in order to have kinky sex. Renee (Karen Sillas) is a woman Eve picks up in the elevator of her office building and seduces that same night. Eve can be sexually intense with Renee, but when Renee brings feelings into the equation and says she has to leave, Eve seems to have no response to the end of the relationship.

Eve's ultimate nightmare image is of an older, fat, large-breasted, mud-splattered, earth mother figure. Ironically, her sister Madelyn is doing her dissertation about a town in Mexico where the women rule and they are all very fat and the women with the thickest pubic hair holds the most power. This mention of another culture, another way a woman can be, highlights how femininity is a social construction. The contortions of modern Western femininity are not universals.

In one of the film's most bizarre and startling scenes, Anunciata describes how to seduce any man to Emma, Ed, and Eve. Anunciata says, "It's all about power... You need to be everything to everybody. Erase yourself. Become something generic." She shimmies and shakes around the room amidst the real women and the mannequins of Emma's bridal shop, the shapes blending into one another.

The womanly wisdom Anunciata offers Ed about how to be feminine is "It's not something that comes naturally, you have to practice every day." Meanwhile, no one seems to notice or care that the young Ed is mutilating herself, even in one scene in which Eve walks in on her cutting LOVE into her leg. Ed chooses not to fill the "feminine" roles her mother and friend so love to display in front of her. She dresses plainly, does not clean herself very well, and chops her hair into an unruly asymmetrical style. Yet it is this young girl in pain who helps Eve come to terms with the pain she carries with her.

Ed has a shrine to women in the desert, where she buries the "baby" that comes out in her bleeding each month. It includes discarded and broken mannequins from her mother's shop. Eve sees Ed heading out to the desert and follows



## Perversions from previous page

her to this shrine. She asks her about the "babies" and wants to comfort Ed when she explains that she cut LOVE into her leg but what she had wanted to do was cut hate into her bones. Ed runs from Eve's advance, but Eve chases her onto a high ledge and she hugs her to her chest in a mutually meaningful exchange.

This review barely touches the surface of the multiple issues and storylines that this movie includes. The book *Female Perversions: The Temptations of Emma Bovary*, which inspired the film is a theoretical book, not fiction. And this is easy to believe, not because it is dry or dense, but because it will make you think, as well as feel.



## Power and Beauty: A Photo Essay

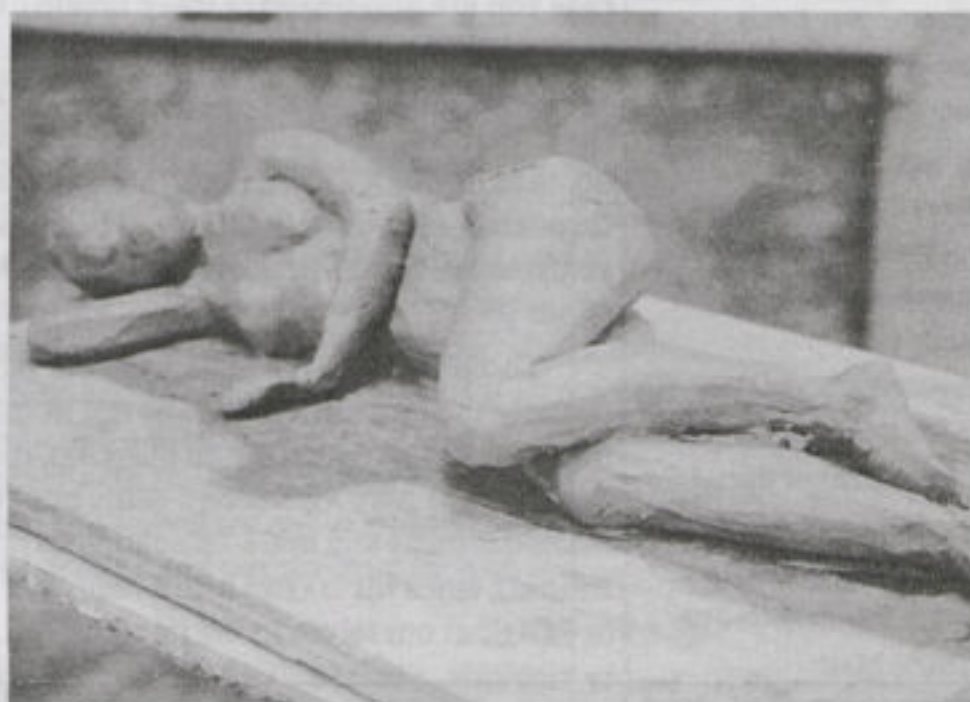
By Deborah Levine

Recently, I flipped through the photos looking for any which would tell bits of my story of "recovery" from chronic dieting and distorted body image. Here are a few that I found. These photos are just momentary glimpses into my spiraling journey toward (and occasionally away from) a strong and healthy sense of beauty and power of my body...and more importantly, the beauty and power of my self within it; the two

are inextricably tied. It is this knowledge that compels me to continue on this journey.

It is hard to believe that still, almost seven years after I began this process of recovery, on a rare occasion I have searched for a specific photo from 1991 to determine if my thighs look as big as they did that vacation. Does it really matter? Will body image always be an issue for me?

*I took a sculpture class in 1990, the summer after I quit dieting. It helped me look more objectively at bodies and begin to see them as beautiful, regardless of shape or size. And it forced me to see bodies as they really are, rather than distorting their proportions in my mind's eye, as I had routinely done with my own body.*



*Definitely a good day in 1994—completely self-conscious admiration of my powerful, beautiful body.*

## Body Image Resources

Council on Size & Weight Discrimination, Inc. P.O. Box 305, Mt. Marion, NY 12456, (914) 679-1209, Fax: (914) 679-1206. Activist group. Influences public opinion and policy through education, information & networking.

AHELP: Association for the Health Enrichment for Large People P.O. Drawer C, Radford, VA 24143, (703) 731-1778. Group for professionals who use the non-dieting approach. Newsletter. AHELP forum.





The journal *Race, Gender & Class* invites submissions for a special issue on Sexuality. The journal seeks papers that explore how the interlocking, socially experienced categories of race, gender, and class affect the ways in which sexuality is defined and acted upon in various segments of society.

Cross-cultural, interdisciplinary, and academic/non-academic papers are welcomed. For further information, please contact the guest editors: Dr. Doris Ewing, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Southwest Missouri State University, Springfield, MO 65807. Phone: 417-836-5684/E-Mail: dwe997f@wpgate.smsu.edu

or Dr. Steven P. Schacht, Department of Sociology, Montana State University, Bozeman, MT 59715. Phone: 406-522-7466/E-Mail: SPSCHACHT@AOL.COM. Deadline for submissions is December 31, 1997.

## Hair from page 1

sigh..., well you know the rest. This... was... different. This... was... *intentional*. (Ooooh, scary!) I reveled in it! I gloried in it! I left my face alone for almost the entire month! Now, regardless of how tired I might be upon awakening (I am definitely not a morning person and I don't drink coffee either), I felt a sense of excitement. Every day the first thing I would do was look, really look into my face. I would take the time to visually and tactilely examine and explore the countenance that was looking back at me.

I stopped plucking my eyebrows too! (Hand to brow, on the inhale, gasp, "Ooooh." Let's not forget to exhale, shall we?) I had plucked my eyebrows almost as long as I had plucked my, waxed ("Geez, that stuff is hot!") my, refused to bleach my, had angst by, and shaved my face. I also shared the joys and (only if you're a woman—unfair ain't it?) social critique of dah-dah-dah-dah-daaaaah: Monobrowism.

One small, teeny-weeny thing I'd like to mention before I forget, is that I am a gloriously zaftig\*, Rubenesque, not small, not medium, somewhere on the scale (ha-ha) of large-sized gal. In case you are also unaware (deep breath): One size does not fit ALL of us and it is a SIN ladies and gentlemen, to grow up FAT in America, Land of the Free (actually more reasonably priced) and home of the BRAVE WOMEN (and men) who through being our authentic (you better believe it girlfriends!) selves, break gender rules every day of our lives!

Those of us (which means most of us, and especially the larger of us) who do not fit (please believe me, I'm not punning on purpose), the *historically* narrowly defined definitions of female/feminine and male/masculine have received training since birth (you heard me), NOT to LIKE or LOOK at ourselves in the mirror. Well... FEH! to that rule. I have looked at and liked myself more in the past six months than I have since I arrived in November '59.

This unheralded, untraditional, brazen, and

dare I say it (yes I do!) proactive face of affairs continued until my ex-partner asked me if I would shave. Now before you all want to hunt her down, please read onward. We had been together for almost six years and she wanted me to come to her parents' house the day after Christmas because they had a gift for me. I asked her why she wanted me to shave. I truly believed her family could accept me with a mustache and goatee. After all, I had been consistently in their lives since 1991, and shaving notwithstanding, it was quite obvious that I had a hairy face.

Here's what I planned: within the first ten minutes, to put her family at ease, I would tell them that obviously I looked a bit different since the last time they had seen me. I had decided to leave my face alone, and considering the time of the year; good will to all, peace on earth, etc., that I was going for the Jesus look. What could be better? A nice Jewish girl going for the Jesus look? I figured: 1) immediately address the change in my appearance and get them to laugh with me, 2) they would relax and remember that they had known me for over five years, and 3) hopefully they would accept and acknowledge me as the whole person I had always been and was still.

December 26, 1996, as a courtesy to Sue and her concerns about how her family would react, I shaved. However, before I did, I wanted to document how I looked, so I had a friend photograph my face from all angles. Then I set up my camera in my friend's bathroom so I could record my transformation into a beardless woman. I had decided to have fun while deconstructing the appearance of my face, and at the same time I experienced a definitive sense of loss that I "had" to shave at all.

We had a nice time visiting Sue's parents and (almost five-year-old) niece. At one point I was in the kitchen with her mother and she was at the breakfast table with her niece. Her niece leaned over and whispered something in her ear and Sue burst out laughing. Later, I asked her what her niece had said that was so funny. Her niece had asked, "Are you two... friends?" (I had been present for the entirety of her life, and her's was the first baptism I ever attended. I was quite honored that by the time she was four years old, she trusted me enough to ask me to take her to the bathroom!).

Clearly, Sue's niece's emphasis on the word "friends" implied she recognized that my relationship to her and place in her family structure was more complex than my just being her aunt's friend. Only she didn't have the necessary vocabulary to truly express what she wanted to say... or did she? Ah, out of the mouths of babes...

Six weeks later (mid-February), I was walk-



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ing in the world with a cute, dark brown—few strands of silver goatee; and a very dark blonde/brown—few strands of golden blonde at the tips (especially visible when smiling) mustache. As my beard and mustache grew in, it occurred to me that having a business card printed with the message located at the beginning of this article would be a useful “tool” to possess. While knowing that some of “Jane and Joe Public’s” responses might not be exactly positive, I wasn’t really ready or comfortably prepared for some of the reactions I had been receiving.

Date: Saturday, May 10, 1997. As plain as the nose on my face (I just couldn’t resist) I had a mustache and a beard. Place: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Mass. Mission: Pick up artwork Fed-Exed previous May to art teacher.

I went searching for my art teacher at the museum. After checking a few places I spoke to a young girl I had seen with about 15 other teenagers.

“Excuse me please, is this Mr. Chisolm’s class?” As she turned around to answer me, her mouth fell open. I’m sure I made quite an impression on her. My speaking voice is quite low (at home when I answered the phone, callers often mistook me for my brother, my father, or “the man of the house”). I was wearing my jet black raincoat (the kind I associate with spies, which fits me in such a way that it’s hard to tell whether I’m a woman or a man, especially when I haven’t been shaving), and my bright red fedora pulled low over my right eye. I smiled at her and waited. She recovered her composure and said, “Uh, uh, yes it is.” She appeared to be around 14 years old and quite surprised.

“Has he arrived yet?” I asked her. Someone else from the group piped up, “Yeah, he’s here. He just went upstairs to get some stuff.” I couldn’t tell who had responded so I said to the entire group, “Thanks, I’m supposed to meet him to pick up some artwork.”

The young lady to whom I had spoken backed away from me and sat down next to her friends. I began to pick up the anxiety, confusion, curiosity, and fear emanating from some of the kids and decided to go out and wait in the rotunda. I wasn’t totally surprised at her reaction, and at the same time I was frustrated and saddened that my presence was a source of discomfort to them. It’s not my intention to frighten people, it “just” happens.

I paced around the rotunda, hands in my pockets, head down, thoughts and feelings colliding. Suddenly, something in me crystallized and without realizing it, I found myself walking back through the door to where they were sitting. It was obvious from the moment I reentered the room that I had been the topic of intense conver-

sation. The girl to whom I had spoken actually clapped her hand over her mouth and looked as if I had caught her, arm elbow deep in the proverbial cookie jar.

My heart was trying to set a new record for beats per minute as I took off my raincoat and hat. I took a breath and felt my throat tighten up as I began to speak to the group at large.

“Yes, I am a woman with a beard. If you’re feeling confused, embarrassed, afraid, curious or not quite sure how to respond; I’m more than happy to answer any questions that are respectfully asked.”

As I spoke, all my years of training with the Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Speakers Bureau (of Boston) automatically kicked in. I looked around the entire group, making eye contact with most of them and grinning the entire time. I felt the tension in the room immediately dissipate. I had become another variation of human to them, not some “thing” to fear. There were a few moments of silence and then a different teenager piped up and said, “I think it’s really cool!”

I located her, kept grinning and said, “Thanks. I was a student of Mr. Chisolm’s last year and he has some pictures to return to me.”

I will be forever grateful to that exuberant, grinning, daring young woman. She opened the door and joyously welcomed me in. She had the courage to speak up for her beliefs and I hope she keeps it for her lifetime!

Once she spoke, some of the other kids started grinning back at me and I could see the body language of most of them relax. Now they were just curious and absorbing my image. I didn’t sense any more hostility or fear. I also made eye contact with the first girl to whom I had spoken and she somewhat shyly looked back before I turned around and put my knapsack on the floor.

When Mr. Chisolm finally bustled in, arms laden with stuff I held open the door for him and we exchanged grins.

**Hair** continues on page 10

### Web Resources:

The Something Fishy web site on eating disorders signs and symptoms, physical dangers, definitions, words for victims suffering, family and friends bulletin board, treatment options, links to other sites and much more. <http://www.something-fishy.com/ed.htm>

Males and Eating Disorders: Includes lists of articles on this subject, Dan’s story, and numerous links. <http://www.primenet.com/~danslos/males.html>

Smashing Network : An organization of women committed to ending beauty prejudice in themselves and our society. Smash negative body images in women. <http://www.dandyweb.com/smash/smash.html>

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Bis Needed for Study  
on Sexuality

The Department of Psychology at the University of Utah is conducting a study called "Sexuality Across the Lifespan." Women and men over 35 of all sexualities are being included in the study, and BBWN has been contacted to help locate bisexual women who would like to answer the survey. If you are interested, survey packets are available in the BRC office at 29 Stanhope Street, or you can complete the questionnaire online at the study website: <http://www.softsolutions.com/survey>.

## Body Image of an Hermaphrodite

by D. L. Makepeace

Walk into any women's bookstore and you'll find entire shelves of books on body image, and they will all tell you body image is cultural brainwashing from the advertising, cosmetics, fashion, and entertainment industries. I think it is, too, but there is much more to it. Most books on gender role and gender difference likewise assume those concepts are taught to us, and only argue about what forces have the power to indoctrinate us. Here too, I think there is more to it than that. Our bodies play a part. We don't know exactly how, but our bodies do shape our self-concept.

I have been following the case of a person researchers call John/Joan since I first read about it in 1973. It is the single most important case I know of for understanding body image and the formation of identity.

A pair of identical twin boys were born in the early 1960s; during circumcision with an electric cautery needle, one boy's penis was badly burned, and much of it dried up and fell off. The

parents were referred to Dr. John Money at Johns Hopkins, a noted and widely published psychologist and an expert in gender (he first coined the term 'gender identity'). Since the child was just a few months old, Money recommended raising the child as a girl, to save the child psychological trauma. They cut off what remained of the phallus, removed the normal testes, and began constructing a vagina for the baby.

The child, now Joan, was raised gently, with pink blankets, cute dresses, dolls and dollhouses, while the other twin was given boyish clothes and toys and treated more roughly. Estrogen was administered at appropriate levels during childhood; the dose was increased at the usual time for puberty, and Joan grew breasts and female pattern pubic and auxiliary hair. She looked like an ordinary girl.

But she didn't act like one. Joan engaged in rough-and-tumble games rather than sedate activities; she played with boys much more

### *The Original Bisexuality: Bodies Blending and Genders Bending*

by D. L. Makepeace

Although its meaning has evolved in recent decades, the word bisexual originally referred to the blending of male and female in body or behavior. Such "intersex" conditions are far less rare than we are lead to believe. Most of the time, these infants' or children's bodies are surgically and/or hormonally altered to conform their bodies to what our society considers "normal" and are, in effect, assigned to live as either male or female.

Presumably, many are satisfied, but we know many are not. The following are a few brief profiles of intersex friends or acquaintances I know whose lives have been drastically altered by psychologists and doctors who felt that in order to "fit in," one must live as either male or female, regardless of the physical, psychological and emotional consequences.

- Kris is a very pretty woman with delicate features, a sweet voice, and fine slender fingers; she is also in love with another woman. She knew, long before she got her hands on her medical record, that she once had a penis. The doctors cut most of it off, but just like a phantom leg or finger, she can still sense it as part of her body. She still has a powerful instinct to use it, to penetrate her lover, but psychologists were sure she would never miss it.

- Cheryl has no sexual sensation at all, and while she can satisfy her female lover, she is denied those pleasures herself. She doesn't feel particularly male or female; she just wishes they had left her alone and not cut off her sex organs because they were "too big for a girl."

- When "Bobbie" was born the doctors suggested this kid would grow up happier as a girl than as a boy. When puberty came Bobbie began to masculinize. But all the relatives, coworkers, and friends had been told this was a girl; they couldn't go changing things now... what would the neighbors think? Estrogen injections were administered only by restraining Bobbie, and as soon as he could, he ran away and lived on the streets. By then, however, Bobbie had developed size DD breasts, and it made living as a male quite impossible. He has a hard time keeping his mind together.

We are beginning to find one another and together we are discovering our true selves and speaking back to the medical and psychological establishment. We are also beginning to raise consciousness about these conditions to allow room in our society for intersexed people. To learn more or find out how to get involved, contact The Middlesex Group at P.O. Box 25, Newtonville, MA 02160 or (617) 630-9263.



than with girls, and with toys intended for her brother and other boys. She was very much a tomboy... but that was not all. Joan was not only uncomfortable with the role she was expected to perform, she did not *feel* like a girl physically. She felt her body was unsuited to her, and she did not like the changes that were happening to her body. She was very upset when her breasts grew. At age 12, she refused to take the female hormones, and eventually, despite all appearances to the contrary, declared, "I'm a boy."

At age 14, Joan refused to continue seeing the psychologists and physicians at Johns Hopkins. Eventually, at the adolescent's own request, local physicians administered testosterone injections, and soon thereafter a cosmetic mastectomy was performed. John went off and lived as a man, grew a beard, got married, and is now a father to three adopted children. He has had a penis surgically constructed, but it is nothing like a natural one.

Throughout all this time, Money and his colleagues wrote in the literature of their remarkable success, and later claimed that the "case was lost to follow-up." It served as the flagship experiment demonstrating that 'gender identity' was malleable, and was taught, not biological.

Dr. Milton Diamond was fascinated by this case, and frustrated that it had been "lost to follow-up," so he investigated the case himself. It is his three follow-up papers and an interview with John himself that this history is based on. One noted historian of sexology has called this case "scientific fraud."

The John/Joan case was the result of an accident, but it is not a unique situation: lots of boys have damage from circumcision or infection. In addition, some children are born not obviously a boy or a girl, or seem to be a mixture of the two. These "intersex conditions" aren't common, but aren't exactly rare, either. One in two thousand babies in North America is born with genitals which are not clearly male or female, or are clearly some of both. One in every 75 newborns has an intersex condition which won't show up until later in childhood, the onset of puberty, or even until they are examined for fertility problems.

The politically correct sociological-psychological theory of "taught" gender identity kept academics happy, sold books, and made our culture a little less sexist, but real people were, and are, sacrificed for these theories. Sometimes boys have their penises cut off and are forced to take hormones and grow breasts; some tomboys have their clitorises surgically removed because they are "too big," while other girls are given testosterone and grow beards and adam's apples and develop gravelly voices.

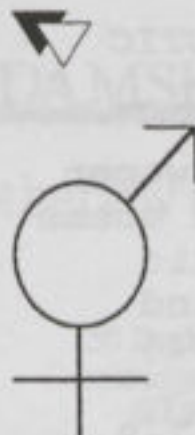
At least one in five, and some estimates say almost one of every two, of these kids say the doctors got it wrong in their case and ask to be reassigned to the "opposite" sex. They know clearly that though they were told they were a boy, that really they were meant to be—that inside they always had been—a girl who should have grown up to be a woman, or, like John/Joan, they feel they were meant to be a boy and then a man.

These recommendations were made because the experts in psychology had decided that self-conception, self-image, and body image were all in the mind. The rising cultural and political message of the sixties were gender equality and sameness, that the only difference between males and females was to be found in the culture.

We all find things about our bodies that we don't like, that we wish were different. I wish my nose were smaller, but I know it's mine. John/Joan looked at his/her own body, and had no basis for forming a male body image. There was no basis for developing a male body image in socialization, either. And yet, there was something in that person which the surgeons, the parents, and the psychologists couldn't change.

If socialization were the sole cause of identity formation, and biology played no part, there wouldn't be people such as these. It is clear that our biology does help shape our self-image, our sense of self. It is not the body we look at and cognitively interpret, but the biology inside our own heads that influences how we see ourselves. Some of body image is formed there; some of sex identity, of sexual orientation, of gender. We are animals too, not simply sociocultural constructs. Animals with culture.

There was evidence to support this before Money became the most outspoken expert in gender identity formation. In the 1950's and 60's, an endocrinologist named Harry Benjamin had published very clear results of other cases indicating that biology contributed an immutable foundation for gender identity formation. When John/Joan was born, we were so busy proving how alike males and females were that we refused to acknowledge our differences. It makes you wonder what we are refusing to acknowledge now.



## Attention Queer Writers!

Outwrite: a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Writer's Conference returns to Boston February 20-22, at a new site, the Boston Sheraton Towers at Copley Place. Contact: Bromfield Street Educational Foundation, 29 Stanhope Street, Boston, MA 02116, 617-262-6969.

## Call for proposals

The 1998 University of Rhode Island Symposium on LGBT issues, "A Global OUTlook," will be held April 9-11 at the Kingston, RI campus. Academic and non-academic submissions are welcome. Deadline for submitting a one-page description of a presentation is November 1, 1997 and should include the title, nature of presentation, approx. length, equipment needed and a brief summary. Mail to: Amy Black and Casey Johnson, Sub-Committee Chairs, 4th Annual Symposium, c/o University of Rhode Island GLBTA, Memorial Union/Student Senate Room #201, Lower College Rd, Kingston, RI 02881. Inquiries can be made to 401-874-5480 or [URI-GLBTA@boris.davis.uri.edu](mailto:URI-GLBTA@boris.davis.uri.edu).




The Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA), the nation's first major civil rights act for lesbian, gays and bisexuals, has been gaining support in Congress and with voters. A recent poll shows 68% of voters are in favor of the Act. Show your support by writing your senator or representative today. The addresses to use are: Your Senator, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC 20510 and Your Rep, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515. Or call the congressional switchboard, 202-224-3121.

## Invitation from page 1

pretend to fit the assumptions of heterosexual vanilla monogamy would be too hazardous to whatever inward integrity I still possess. It's here that my choices of embodiment—both private and public images of my body—become most important.

There's a lot about my body that no one around here will ever see—most of my piercings and tattoos, the angel-wing cutting on my back, the occasional prized stripes and bruises, the leather waist-cincher from Dark Garden that I wear under most of my clothes. These elements are vital, though, in preserving, however privately, a sense of my own identity. My body is queer by most anyone's standards in my/its refusal to take seriously the demands of "normal" beauty or pleasure. And having these hidden pleasures is a pleasure itself, though the enforcement of that hiding can sometimes take the edge off of that delight.

And what does show is just queer enough to allow others to wonder. (And to mean, often, that I have to work a bit harder to prove my professional competence.) The tattoo under my collarbone (a tribal salamander) is often visible; the black niobium rings through my nostril and lower lip are delicate but unavoidable; the chain that loops through 13 holes in my left ear is a fine femme thread of silver, but that doesn't keep people from staring. This too gives me a little more integrity; I can't be full-out out in the world, but I can show enough that the right people can, if not know, at least guess.

My image of my own body is that it's less a battleground than a playground. I delight in aesthetic tensions—the androgyny of boyish women and slender long-haired men; and the metal, ink and scars that play off of my more conspicuously femme self. It is an invitation to play, too, even in a place where so few identities or bodies would dare to be playful. 

## Hair from page 7

"Hello, stranger," I said.


"Laura, it's so good to see you! I'm so glad I found your pictures! Let me just put these things down so we can go over your work."

Mr. Chisolm never separated the Laura without hair from the Laura with a mustache and goatee. (I had always wanted to learn how to draw, and he had been willing to let me work at my own pace, and draw things that had meaning to me instead of following the curriculum. He usually took time after class to show me different ways of creating images and we often had long conversations about perceptions of images.) We were literally face-to-face for about 6 or 7 minutes while discussing my artwork and we interacted and connected the same as before.

To him, regardless of whether I had hair on my face, I was still Laura. This was especially significant to me, since as a professional artist and drawing teacher of all skill levels, he noticed the minutest changes in the appearance of just about everything.

Then I took my leave so as not to disrupt his class any further. Before leaving, I hugged Mr. Chisolm while thanking him for so carefully safeguarding my artwork. He smiled back, said again how wonderful it was to see me and to not be a stranger. I collected my things, grinned once more at his students and walked out into the rotunda.

I was ecstatic about how those kids and I interacted. I could have been angry or defensive, "What are you looking at, kid?" Instead, I gave them another image and perception of how many different ways you can be human and walk on the Earth. Their lives and mine would never be the same! I glided out of the Museum of Fine Arts, grinning at everyone I passed, and most of them grinned back!

\*zaftig: The Joys of Yiddish, pg. 449, by Leo Rosten. Pronounced zoff-tig. From German: "juicy." 1. Juicy. "What a zaftig plum."  
2. Provocative, seminal, germinal. "The book is full of zaftig ideas."  
3. Plump, buxom, well-rounded (of a female). 

### Body Electric's CELEBRATING THE BODY EROTIC FOR WOMEN

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## CALENDAR *continued from page 12*

Cambridge, MA 02140 or e-mail text only (not images) to both lindab@shore.net and eruthstr@mail.lesley.edu.

**Biversity Halloween Party.** 8:30 p.m. at Morgan's in Somerville. Costumes encouraged. Call or e-mail to RSVP and for directions at: (617) 625-5966 or amazani@aol.com.

### November 2 ♦ Sunday

**Bi Space.** 7-9 p.m. (see October 5th)

### November 4 ♦ Tuesday

**Bi Women's Rap.** 7:30 p.m. (see October 7th)

### November 5 ♦ Wednesday

**Coming Out as Bisexual.** 7-9 p.m. (see October 1st)

### November 1 - 2 ♦ Saturday - Sunday

**Speaking Out**, a two day training for speaking out on gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender issues, at Simmons College, 300 The Fenway, in Boston. This training, sponsored by the Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual Speakers Bureau of Boston, is designed for anyone who wants to use public speaking as a tool for social change. Cost: \$70 (more if you can, less if you can't), \$35 (college students/low income), \$20 (teens aged 14-17). Info and to register: (617) 450-9581 (press 3). Advanced registration is requested.

### November 9 ♦ Sunday

**BBWN Potluck Brunch** at noon. Join us at Robyn's in Central Square, Cambridge to catch up with old friends, meet new ones and hear the latest gossip. Call for directions at (617) 576-1066. All women welcome.

### BiWomen Subscription Form

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE (Optional) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ New Subscriber    \_\_\_\_ Renewal

SUBSCRIPTION RATE (sliding scale)

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THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

BBWN

P.O. BOX 639

Cambridge, MA 02140

### November 12 ♦ Wednesday

**BBWN Introductory Meeting.** A safe space for women to connect with the bisexual community. 7:30 p.m. - 9 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., Cambridge. Info: (617) 354-8807.

**Bisexual Resource Center Board Meeting.** 7-9 p.m. (see October 8th)

### November 13 ♦ Thursday

**Bi Married Women's Support Group.** 7-9 p.m. (see October 9th)

### November 14 ♦ Friday

**Bi Coffee House.** 7:30 p.m. at the Phoenix Coffeehouse, Central Square's hottest cyber cafe'. 675 Mass. Ave., Cambridge.

### November 15 ♦ Saturday

**Biversity Brunch.** 11:30 a.m. Meet, greet and eat at Thornton's, 100 Peterborough Street in Boston's Fenway area. Nearest T stops are Fenway on the D branch of the Green line and Kenmore on the B, C, and D branches.

### November 18 ♦ Tuesday

**Coming Out as Bisexual.** 7-9 p.m. (see October 1st)

**Bi Women's Rap.** 7:30 p.m. (see October 7th)

### November 23 ♦ Sunday

**BBWN Potluck Brunch** at noon. This is the week to eat, so why wait 'til Thursday to get started? Bring your favorite foods or beverages and your charming self to Deborah's in Jamaica Plain. T and bus accessible. Info and directions: (617) 534-5833. All women welcome.

### November 25 ♦ Tuesday

**BBWN Dinner.** 6 p.m. Load up on tasty Italian cuisine with us at Bertucci's, 49 Stanhope St., Boston. After dinner, we'll head next door to the Bi Office for the BiWomen mailing.

**BiWomen mailing,** 7-9 p.m. at the Bi Office. It's fun, worthwhile and you get to be with a roomful of wonderful bi women. What could be better than this?

### November 30 ♦ Sunday

**Biversity Brunch.** 1 p.m. Enjoy great vegetarian Asian food in a unique atmosphere at Buddha's Delight II, 404 Harvard Street, Brookline. Nearest T stop is Coolidge Corner on the B branch of the Green line.

**Different For Girls** will show at the Kendall Square Cinema, Cambridge throughout most of October. This story depicts once-boyhood friends Kim, a new-to-her-sexuality M to F transsexual, and Paul, a motor-cycle riding punker. A chance meeting as adults raises questions and eventually leads to romance. Info and show times: (617) 494-9800.

**Advertising in BiWomen is easy - and effective.**

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## The "Bi Office"

is the Bisexual Resource Center, located at 29-33 Stanhope Street, behind Club Cafe' and right next door to Bertucci's. For info call (617) 424-9595.

## Ongoing Events

### 1st & 3rd Tuesdays:

**Bi Women's Rap.** 7:30 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St, Cambridge. For info and discussion topics call (617) 354-8807.

### Wednesdays:

**Gendertalk.** 8:30-9:00 p.m. on WMBR 88.1 FM. Deals with transgender and queer issues.

### 3rd Thursdays:

**GLBisexual Speakers Bureau Meeting.** 8 p.m., at the Boston Living Center, 29-33 Stanhope Street, Boston (in the same building as the Bi office). Wheelchair accessible. General meeting at 6:45 p.m. with the theme program starting at 8 p.m. Info: (617) 354-0133.

### Saturdays:

**Lavender Country Dance Group.** 8-11 p.m., beginners' lesson at 7:30. Smoke- and alcohol-free. Open to all gays, lesbians, bisexuals and their friends. First Church of Jamaica Plain, corner of Centre and Eliot Sts., JP. On MBTA Green and Orange lines. \$5. Info: Janet, (617) 522-2216.

# CALENDAR

## October 1 ♦ Wednesday

**Coming Out as Bisexual.** An informal support group for people who think they may be bisexual or attracted to more than one gender. 7-9 p.m. at the Bi Office. A small donation is requested to help pay for the space. Sponsored by the Bisexual Resource Center. Info: (617) 424-9595.

## October 4 ♦ Saturday

**Biversity Autumn Walk.** Meet at 1:00 p.m. sharp outside at the Davis Square, Somerville T stop (directly across from Johnny D's) for a walk along the bike path to see the foliage.

## October 5 ♦ Sunday

**Bi Space.** 7-9 p.m. A friendly discussion space to meet other bisexuals and talk about bisexual issues. A \$2 donation is requested to help pay for rental of the space. Bi Space is at the Bisexual Resource Center at 29 Stanhope St. in Boston.

## October 7 ♦ Tuesday

**Bi Women's Rap.** 7:30 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St, Cambridge. Info: (617) 354-8807.

## October 8 ♦ Wednesday

**Bisexual Resource Center Board Meeting.** 7-9 p.m. This monthly meeting helps keep the BRC's educational activities and programs on track. Open to all bi and bi-friendly people.

## October 9 ♦ Thursday

**Bi Married Women's Support Group.** 7-9 p.m. at the Bi Office. For bi women who are married to or in a relationship with a man. Call Debbie at (617) 731-9060 for info.

## October 10 ♦ Friday

**Bi Coffeehouse.** 7:30 p.m. Enjoy the fine company and great desserts at Mildred's Coffeehouse 552 Tremont Street in the South End, right across from the Boston Center for the Arts. Nearest T stop is Back Bay on the Orange Line.



## October 11 ♦ Saturday

**Double Feature at the Brattle.** 7:15 p.m./10:00 p.m. Director's cuts of *Brazil* and *Blade Runner* will be shown at the Brattle Theater in Harvard Square. Meet in the balcony before either show. Nearest T stop is Harvard on the Red Line.

## October 15 ♦ Wednesday

**BBWN Planning Meeting.** 7-9 p.m. at the Bi Office. Can you say participation? BBWN needs your involvement to make things happen. Please come help make BBWN a more exciting, vibrant and active group.

## October 12 ♦ Sunday

**BBWN Brunch and Movie Outing.** We'll meet at noon for brunch at the Cambridge Brewing Company, 1 Kendall Square, Cambridge. After brunch we'll head over to the Kendall Square Cinema to catch a matinee of *Different for Girls* (described on page 11). Nearest T stop is Kendall Square on the Red Line.

## October 18 ♦ Saturday

**Biversity Brunch.** 11:30 a.m. Enjoy a hearty meal in the company of friends new and old at Doyle's Cafe', 3484 Washington Street in Jamaica Plain. Nearest T stop is Forest Hills on the Orange Line.

**A Nature Walk** through the Arnold Arboretum in Jamaica Plain will immediately follow the brunch at Doyle's Cafe'.

## October 21 ♦ Tuesday

**Coming Out as Bisexual.** 7-9 p.m. (see October 1st)  
**Bi Women's Rap Group Social Outing,** 7:30 p.m. (see October 7th). Meet at the Women's Center.

## October 22 ♦ Wednesday

**Youth Speakers Bureau training.** Boston Gay and Lesbian Adolescent Social Services will sponsor training for LGBT youth ages 13-25. 6:15 - 7:30 p.m. at the GLASS Community Center, 93 Mass. Ave, Boston. Learn how to educate students and others about homophobia and biphobia. Info: Carla at (617) 266-3349 or cmoniz@jri.org.

## October 25 ♦ Saturday

**Biversity Halloween Party.** 6:30 p.m. - 11:30 p.m. Why not start your Halloween celebrating a week early at Jay, Heidi, Lisa, and Bearpaw's new house in Jamaica Plain. Call (617) 524-6984 or e-mail js@aq.org for directions.



## October 26 ♦ Sunday

**Biversity Brunch.** 1:00 p.m. Join us to check out a funky new brunch location at the Otherside Cafe, 407 Newbury St. in Boston, across Mass. Ave from Tower records. Nearest T stop is Hynes Convention Center/ICA on the Green Line.

## October 31 ♦ Friday

**BiWomen Submissions Deadline.** This issue's topic is Spirituality. Tell us about what spiritual path or paths you have taken and why. What, if any, are the connections between spirituality and sexuality/sexual orientation for you. Send articles (on any topic), calendar entries, letters, black-and-white art, news and views to: BiWomen, P.O. Box 639,

**CALENDAR** continues on page 11



## *Spiritual Journeys...*

### **Chanukah Falls on Christmas This Year**

*by R.H.T.*

"There are Jews there? Really? No way. How many?" As if I could count...

I always receive a puzzled look when I recount my memories of Jewish holidays celebrated in my Midwestern hometown to someone from the East or West Coast. Wearily, I try to describe the warmth of familiar faces and voices, returning from frequently inspiring services, and oh, those luscious cooking smells from latkes (potato pancakes), kugel (a noodle dish) and other special holiday foods, that really did happen in the Bible Belt. Those who questioned my religion based on my Midwestern heritage never asked, "So, tell me, what were the benefits of being a Jew in the Midwest?" What if they had asked, "Did this allow for a particularly special understanding of other religions?" I often wish they would; I would say emphatically, "Yes!" As in any other part of the world, we were a distinct minority, even more so than in New York or L.A. And from this, I learned how to be different.

But, did it prepare me for being different in the additional way I am different now, i.e., my bisexuality? My childhood was not especially known for its duality, at least not on the surface. I was raised in a Jewish home, which, although certainly not obsessively observant, followed the "big" rules of Judaism. For instance, we did not eat pork or shellfish in the home or elsewhere; we went to services once in awhile, always on the "big" holidays; my siblings and I attended Hebrew school; we were "Bar or Bat Mitzvah'd" (the Jewish rite of passage); and of course, my sister and I were told in no uncertain terms, "you will marry a nice Jewish man." (My brother was told to marry a nice Jewish woman.)

The predominantly Christian world of my hometown existed for all intents and purposes as my secondary world. We were taught not to connect permanently to it; but I know I connected anyway. There is an eternal and understandable fear in Judaism, a fear that the religion is forever fragile and growing

**Chanukah** continues on page 8



### **From Catholicism to Paganism: One Bisexual Woman's Story**

*by Ann Goglia*

I was raised Catholic, but knew from the tender age of twelve that it wasn't working for me. I unhappily continued to attend Catholic Church with my parents through my adolescence. As an adult, I found that certain aspects of the institution of Catholicism turned me off to churches in general. While living in Binghamton, a small city in upstate New York, I joined a Unitarian Universalist Church, but found even that progressive bastion was too church-like. I felt a sense of spiritual connection, and a desire to share it with other people, but the formalities of a church setting did not provide that for me.

After moving to Boston, I joined a community group called Common Unity. Our group has incorporated different religions by reclaiming them in our image: feminist, anti-racist, anti-homophobic, inclusive, politically progressive, and environmentally

**Pagan** continues on page 6

#### **ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:**

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### Volunteers of the Month

Jeanne  
Debbie Block-  
Schwenk  
Ellen Cullen  
Linda Blair  
Lynn Rosenbaum  
Sarah Hickok  
Rosalie  
Linda Dyndiuk  
Robyn Ochs  
Kate Griffin



*And many more  
wonderful  
women! You  
know who you  
are! Thank you,  
thank you, thank  
you!*

Thanks again!

BiWomen is published  
bi-monthly.

Editorial Team for this  
issue of BiWomen:

Linda Blair  
Ellyn Ruthstrom

Printed on  
recycled paper

*The Boston Bisexual Women's Network is a feminist, not-for-profit collective organization whose purpose is to bring women together for support and validation. It is meant to be a safe environment in which women of all sexual self-identities, class backgrounds, racial, ethnic and religious groups, ages, abilities and disabilities are welcome. Through the vehicles of discussion, support, education, outreach, political action and social groups related to bisexuality, we are committed to the goals of full acceptance as bisexuals within the gay and lesbian community, and to full acceptance of bisexuality and the liberation of all gay people within the larger society.*

### New Editorial Team Urges You to Contribute

As of last issue, I have jumped aboard the *BiWomen* editorial team. Linda Blair, who has been editing the newsletter for over three years, and I will be co-editing *BiWomen* together. I've been part of BBWN for about two and a half years and have periodically written articles and reviews for the newsletter. Mostly, I have been helping to organize BBWN events and handling the organization's correspondence; now I would like to contribute to BBWN by putting some of my editorial skills to work.

Linda and I welcome input from our readers. Being based in Boston, our active members are usually located in this area, but the beauty of our newsletter is that it reaches to many parts of this country and even overseas. Do you have a theme you would like addressed? Would you like to have an event mentioned in our calendar? Would you like to write for us? We would love to hear your suggestions and your insights. Our next issue is Fiction, so you talented writers out there send us your new stuff!

I'm looking forward to channeling my energy towards a newsletter that reaches so many fabulous bi women. Keeping our community connected is *so* important. Join us.

Ellyn Ruthstrom

### Upcoming Themes:

**April/May:**

*International Bis*

**June/July:**

*Sports & Hobbies:*

*The Swimsuit Issue*

### Coming in *Bi Women*:

The Theme for the  
February/March issue is:

#### Fiction

Written any short stories lately? What kind of fiction do you like? Science fiction, erotica, humor, satire, fantasy? Share a piece of your work with *BiWomen*. Or interview a bi woman writer you know. Or write about a piece of fiction that you *really love*.

DEADLINE: January 2, 1998



Please provide submissions on paper (typed or handwritten), on disk (PC or Mac) or by e-mail to [lindab@shore.net](mailto:lindab@shore.net) and [eruthstr@lesley.edu](mailto:eruthstr@lesley.edu). Please submit only *text* by e-mail. We cannot accept your art or photos electronically. Include your name and phone number if possible.

*If you do not want your name published, please tell us.* Otherwise, we may assume that you do not mind being listed as a contributor. You may contribute anonymously, or use just your first name.

Send articles, calendar entries, letters, black-and-white art, news and views to:

BiWomen  
P.O. Box 639  
Cambridge, MA 02140



All articles and art appearing in this newsletter are copyrighted by the authors and artists.



## Boston Area Bis and Allies Needed to Host IBC5 Visitors

Organizers of the 5th International Bisexual Conference (IBC5) are expecting over 600 bisexuals, friends, and allies to converge on the campus of Harvard University on the weekend of April 3-5, 1998 for the *largest ever* conference on bisexuality! More than 400 conferees are expected to attend from outside the Boston area, including many students and foreign travelers.

As those of us who live here know, Boston area hotel prices are very high and many people cannot afford to attend without alternate housing arrangements. So when you fill out the registration form included with this issue of *BiWomen*, please consider offering community housing for one, two, or as many people as you can. Your hospitality will not only add greatly to the success of the conference but likely enrich your own experience and perhaps forge a new friendship or two.

The three-day conference, entitled "One World, Many Faces: Unity and Diversity in Bi Communities, Queer Communities, and the World" will feature more than 100 workshops, panels, presentations, papers, and performances. A track on Women's Issues has recently been added to the lineup. Other subject tracks include: Activism/Organizing; Youth/Student; Writers/Literature; Media/Culture; Relationships; Gender; Research/Theory; Bisexual History; Spirituality; Safer Sex/HIV; Personal Growth; Sexuality; Computer/Internet; Non-Bi Partners/Families; Performance; Film and Video; Our Bodies: Differing Ability, Health, Image; Global/Regional/Racial/Cultural/Class Differences, and Track X (other sessions).

Currently planned sessions will feature presenters from England, Germany, Finland, Canada, Argentina, Scotland, Australia, Netherlands, and the U.S. Proposals for papers, performances, panel discussions, and workshops to be presented in English and/or Spanish are still needed and will be accepted for all conference tracks until February 1, 1998. Contact the BRC (info below) about proposal submissions.

Advertising in the IBC5 Program Book is a cost effective way to reach over 600 expected conferees with your business or group's message. (See page 7 for ad rates and contact information.)

For more conference information, call the Bisexual Resource Center at (617) 424-9595, email [info@biconf.org](mailto:info@biconf.org), or visit the IBC5 web site at: <http://www.biconf.org>.



### BBWN Steering Committee Minutes: October 15th

A big concern for the coming year is to get more people involved with planning events. BBWN continues to have its once a month brunch in a member's home, but recently people haven't come forward to organize other events. These gatherings help people feel connected to each other so we want to think about ways to encourage this.

Last year's House Party was such a success, we decided to organize another for this year. Amy and Ananda have graciously offered their home again. The party will be on Saturday night, December 13th. (See Calendar for more info.)

We had a long discussion about the newsletter and how we can develop our subscriber base. Ellyn mentioned subscriptions have dropped over the last year and suggested we reduce the print run until we get the number back up again. We will send another reminder to those who haven't renewed yet.

We talked about getting the BBWN's name out in more places and distributing the newsletter in as many places as possible, such as conferences and other meetings. Linda mentioned we could ask other bi publications to feature articles on BBWN's 15th anniversary in 1998. We will see if some publications will exchange ads with us. We also decided to run a New Year's Special, get two subscriptions for the price of one! And, we will also be more diligent about having our activities listed in *Sojourner* and *Bay Windows*.

We discussed the International Bisexual Conference coming up in April. BBWN would like to sponsor an event at the conference, preferably an all women event to promote networking between individuals and between groups. BiNet is planning a fundraiser on Friday night of the conference, so it was agreed that BBWN would hold its event on Saturday evening.

*Did someone say Party?!*

Yes, we did. And if you were lucky enough to have been at last year's BBWN House Party, you know *we know* how to party. Ananda and Amy have volunteered their apartment near Davis Square in Somerville again for the December 13th event. See the calendar for more info.



*Happy Birthday to Us!!*

1998 happens to be a landmark year for BBWN; we will be 15 this year and we may just celebrate the whole year round. Stay tuned for anniversary activities and ways that *you* can participate.



Goodness In  
Action

Do not do  
anything harmful;  
do only what is  
good; purify and  
train your own  
mind: This is the  
teaching of the  
Buddha; this is  
the path to  
enlightenment.

- The Buddha

from *Awakening  
the Buddha  
Within* by Lama  
Surya Das

## My Spiritual Journey Away From Religion

By Kate Griffin

When the editors of *BiWomen* invited me to write this, I was struck by the irony of the timing. Deadline, they said, was 10/31. Halloween. How appropriate! All Souls celebrations and Day of the Dead time. And, on a personal note: the day I left part of my heart in France and started the journey of becoming an American again after eighteen years out.

To be honest, "Spiritual" is a word I never used the first 35-40 years of my life because I grew up with another word: Religion. This word so dominated my life as a child that I spent much of my adult life running away from it. Why was Christianity so distasteful for me? Many reasons were very clear, but a significant one only started becoming clear six years ago. In a Unitarian Universalist Church, the minister read the Bible story of Abraham and Isaac and during the talk-back after the sermon, people told her that she should never have used that horrible story (Abraham ties his son down and starts to stab him as proof of his love for God?!) as a children's story. One woman spoke of "divine child abuse."

And that was the beginning of my understanding of how the Bible is used, how religion is used to deny children the right to be carefree souls and to keep women in their "place," which is certainly not up there with men. Well, here is the way it goes: GOD, then MAN, then women, then children, then animals, then plants, then rocks and dirt...as if any of us could live without the dirt and plants. As if we were not part, all of us, of an interdependent web of being. I learned that "spare the rod and spoil the child," which has been used for generations, was an excuse to hit small children. I learned that my instincts for my own survival were correct; this kind of religion was not right for me, it could not produce a healthy me.

And I almost threw out the baby with the bath water; almost missed that spiritual and religious are *not* the same thing. Discovering the difference, I began the conscious part of my spiritual journey.


I have learned that I must first love myself and be kind to myself. That as an abused child, I can do things to be nice to that child inside who was frozen into eternally feeling like a four-year-old in certain situations because some evil man stopped her development at that age. Much of this part of the journey is lightened by Melody Bettie's *The Language of Letting Go*. I've read it first thing almost every morning of my life for the past six years.

The second thing that I have learned is that I cannot change the world. I cannot change anyone, except myself, and the burden of saving the world that was laid on me at those summer night church revival meetings in my beloved hot, humid

Southland was unfair, because impossible. For this part of the journey, I read the *Tao Te Ching*. This book, from about 500 b.c.e., makes provocative statements such as "Success is as dangerous as failure...Whether you go up the ladder or down it, your position is shaky" and "Do you want to improve the world? I don't think it can be done. The world is sacred. It can't be improved."

I read Stephen Mitchell's translation of the *Tao* because he translates "the Master" as "she" as often as "he." I have learned that if what we believe to be divine and holy does not reflect us, then we can never really see ourselves as sacred. (Fat chance women have when the top three are Father, Son and Holy Ghost!).

I have found that being in the moment, that learning to love the moment, is very important and that painting a wall or washing dishes can be as fulfilling as seeing a movie.

So, I started my spiritual journey by turning away from the patriarchy and rigidity and rules of religion. It has been and is a long road to self-discovery and self-acceptance. I've dropped baggage along the way and am learning to love myself first in order to really love others. Today, following my spiritual path simply means taking all the steps necessary to becoming a truly kind person. And tomorrow? 

*Kate Griffin is currently weaving unemployment into her spiritual journey.*

\*\*\*\*\*

Dear *BiWomen*,

I've really been enjoying the newsletter. You've had some great themes and great original writings. I really enjoyed the erotica issue a few months back, including Susan Rooney's piece on phone sex work. Excellent! Also, in another issue, the femme identity piece by Liz Nania was well written and powerful. It's been great to see *BiWomen* in my mailbox every other month. I'm now out in the middle of western New York and haven't met any out bi women - although I have my suspicions about a few women that I'm becoming friends with. Keep up the good work!

Regards,  
Kathleen Hepburn  
(former *BiWomen* editor)






## Catholic Bishops Urge Parents to Love Their Gay Children

In a pastoral letter released this past September, the U.S. National Conference of Catholic Bishops advised parents of gay children to put love and support for their sons and daughters before church doctrine that condemns "homosexual activity." The document, entitled "Always Our Children," states that parents must not reject their gay children because sexual orientation is not freely chosen and that "God does not love someone any less simply because he or she is homosexual." The letter encourages parents to create an atmosphere in which a child would be willing to discuss his or her sexual orientation. "This child, who has always been God's gift to you, may now be the cause of another gift: your family becoming more honest, respectful and supportive," the bishops said.

The bishops' letter describes parents of gay children as suffering from guilt, shame, and loneliness and it acknowledges that gay youth run a greater risk of drug abuse and suicide and that many are rejected by their families and end up on the streets. The letter, however, in no way abandons Catholic doctrine that sex is "morally acceptable" only within the bounds of "heterosexual marriage." It states clearly that sexual activity between same-sex partners is "immoral," it tells parents to encourage their gay children to lead chaste lives and it is not "an endorsement of...a homosexual lifestyle."

The document also encourages priests to welcome gays into parishes, to help establish or promote support groups for parents of gay children and to let people know from the pulpit and elsewhere that they are willing to talk about "homosexual issues."

Though this all seems well and good and should be considered a step in the right direction, it still doesn't put gay children on the same plane as say a straight Catholic who decides to have sex before marriage. If "heterosexual marriage" is the only true way for people to have a church sanctioned sexual relationship, then there is still no way for lesbian, gay, or bisexual Catholics to have their same-sex partnerships acknowledged by the church. It appears that the letter is designed more to assuage the guilt of parents and those who have not been supportive of gay Catholics in the past.

The most glaring contradiction of this pastoral letter is the acknowledgement of sexual orientation being caused by "nature." Usually nature in the church refers to things created by God, so it does seem a rather cruel joke for God to create gay people but not allow them (us) to have satisfying and loving relationships. To look on the bright side, many L/G/B people and their allies have been working very hard to achieve this recognition, so there may be hope for more movement by the church in the future. 

### Dignity

Dignity is a national lay movement of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered Catholics, their families, and their friends. In local chapters, participants worship openly together, share personal and spiritual concerns, and work together on educational and justice issues.

#### Dignity/Boston

P.O. Box 408, Boston, MA 02117-0408, 617-421-1915. Services are held every Sunday at 5:30 at St. John the Evangelist Church, 35 Bowdoin St, Beacon Hill, Boston.

#### Dignity/USA

1500 Massachusetts Ave, N.W., #11, Washington, DC 20005, 800-877-8797, DIGNITY@aol.com

## G/L/B/T Spiritual and Religious Resources

### National Organizations

Affirmation: United Methodists for LGB Concerns, Ph: (708) 733-9590, email: [umaffirm@concentric.net](mailto:umaffirm@concentric.net), Web site: <http://www.concentric.net/~umaffirm>

Inner Light Unity Fellowship: P.O. Box 30811, Bethesda, MD 20824-0811, publishes *Coming Out Pagan*, a quarterly journal of GLB spirituality/nature religions.

Interweave: c/o Unitarian Universalists Association, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, MA 02108. Ph: (617) 742-2100 x 470, email: [olbgc@uua.org](mailto:olbgc@uua.org). Dedicated to the spiritual, political and social well-being of GLBT UU's and their allies.

Seventh Day Adventist Kinship, Ph: (800) 4GAY-SDA. Support groups for GLB SDAs. Chapters across the U.S.

### Greater Boston Area

African Americans L/G Ministry	(617) 445-8173
American Baptists Concerned	(508) 681-8409
Am Tikva (LGB Jewish Congregation)	(617) 926-2536
Arlington Street Church (U U)	(617) 536-7050
Central Congregational Church	(617) 524-3343
Emmanuel Episcopal Church	(617) 536-3355
Eastern Orthodox Christians	(617) 569-4364
Friends for G & L Concerns (Quakers)	(617) 876-6883
Justice Alliance (Christian, N. Shore)	(508) 921-0810
Jesuit Urban Center	(617) 536-8440
Lutherans Concerned, Cambridge	(617) 876-3256
St. Luke's/Margaret's (Episcopal)	(617) 782-2029





### **PFLAG Scholarships Announced**

For the first time, Greater Boston PFLAG (Parents, Friends and Families of Lesbians and Gays) is offering two \$1000 scholarships to Massachusetts high school seniors planning to attend college next fall. To be eligible, a student must be a member of a Gay/Straight Alliance or a community based organization for gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered youth. Applications must be returned by January 30, 1998. Winners will be announced on March 21, 1998. Call Shirley Hayden at 617-332-5404 to request an application form.

### **Pagan from page 1**

aware. We celebrate many of the Jewish and Pagan holidays, but have also found a way to reclaim Easter. This last holiday has been an important piece for me in integrating the Catholicism I grew up with into my current spirituality. (I'm even in the process of reclaiming the Virgin Mary as a goddess—certainly her prototype was a goddess. The Catholic Church did an excellent job of co-opting the religions of the people it forced itself upon.) Each December we put on our "Winter Festival" which celebrates the Winter Solstice, Chanukah, Christmas, and Kwanzaa all in one evening. Eastern religions also play a part. My current household has daily meditation, which often includes yoga.

As I've had a chance to experience these different religious practices, I've incorporated all of them into my spiritual being. The one that touches me most deeply is Paganism. In the past year and a half, I've attended Pagan gatherings outside of Common Unity, mainly those offered by Earthspirit. Earthspirit was started in 1980 as a organization for Pagans in New England, but has grown into a nationwide network with its own websites. Their events are not just for Pagans — I've met people from a variety of spiritual practices and beliefs, including Christianity. The basic premise is that one has a respectful awareness of the Earth. Earthspirit describes itself as a community which "experiences ourselves and everything that exists as vital parts of the whole of Nature...all things in the universe interact in both a physical and spiritual relationship." Finding others who think this way is a "coming home" in much the way finding the bisexual community was for me. I find many similarities in both communities: open mindedness, inclusivity, and a willingness to stretch the boundaries beyond what we were taught to believe is "normal." There are Pagans of all sexual orientations, and many Pagan folks are open to bisexuality.

Earthspirit's base is still here in Massachusetts, where all their events take place. In October of 1996 and again in 1997, I went to Twilight

Covenings, a gathering of about 200 people at a camp in the Berkshire Mountains. The gathering is divided up into clans named after animals, each with its own theme and leader. The clan meets 4-5 times over the course of the weekend, and becomes a support group. In Paganism, Fall is the time of starting to turn inside ourselves, the time to choose and to begin the internal work of the winter months. Twilight Covenings, with its clans and rituals, offers a structured and supportive setting to start this work in a conscious way.

In 1996, I was part of the Dolphin Clan, which was lead by a bisexual woman, Elena Wyldheart. This clan was about closeness and playfulness, and also about what gets in the way of getting close. There was lots of physical touch, some of it sensual, among all the genders in the group. While no doubt homophobia still played a part in some of the dynamics, there was less of it than I have seen in most other environments. The mixture of sexual orientations included straight, bi, lesbian, and gay. I have been to a few other workshops and rituals lead by Elena over this past year and they have had a definite queer sensibility. The Dolphin Clan has continued in some form, although always changing and growing. My participation in that clan still effects me, partly through my experience of that weekend over a year ago, and partly through friendships that were forged and continue to flourish.

One of the Dolphins led a women's retreat in September for the purpose of paying attention to the way we fall into care-taking roles, and sometimes fail to care for ourselves. We spent the weekend nurturing ourselves through dancing, swimming, eating, playing, and sharing our stories. The retreat was in honor of Lilith, who stands for women's wild spirit and refusal to be dominated. It was good to spend the weekend in the company of women who were encouraging each other to say no to what is oppressive in their lives, and take the steps needed to lead the fullest, richest lives possible. I found it especially helpful to me personally, as I was about to embark on the adventure of leaving my human services job to start a new career as a storyteller and workshop leader.

For this year's Twilight Covenings, I had hoped to participate in the Swan Clan, which would have involved spending most of the week in silence. I wanted to work on my internal critical voices, which become louder when I allow myself quiet time. It is then I can truly comprehend how vicious, inappropriate, and not part of my true self they are, and so defuse them. This was especially important to me given the new life I was about to start — I was going to need all my strength and self-confidence in myself as an artist and an entrepreneur. But Fate decided differ-



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ently, and I ended up in the Leopard Clan. When I was packing for the trip, I realized how much leopard print clothing I have accumulated over the past 15 years, and thought maybe Fate knew better than I. The Leopard Clan focused on the body as sacred and magical. We worked with movement, dance, breath, and touch. The leader was skillful enough and the group was open enough so we were able to play like kittens in a basket during the first exercise. While it seemed that more participants of this clan were heterosexual, there was still plenty of same-sex affection and appreciation. One of the women in the group wanted to have a small ritual around a past trauma in her life, and asked three women in the clan to participate in this. We walked to a nearby stream, and each talked about letting go of pain in our lives, as part of the ritual we created. I shared about my inner critical voices and how I was letting go of them. Every time I heard those voices during that weekend, I reminded myself that I deserved to be treated with respect and compassion.

As a storyteller, I know the soul of my art comes from a deeply spiritual place. I only perform stories that move me and touch my spirit. I have started to learn some stories which have direct Pagan roots, but all my stories are Pagan in the sense they show how connected we are to

other people, to nature, to the universe. It is in the context of this connection that it makes complete sense that we should strive for closeness with people, regardless of their gender. It's a place where many people have gotten hurt when they were young, and so feel as though it's wrong now. Sexism and homophobia are deeply ingrained in our culture, but I believe they are learned behaviors, and can be unlearned. I believe most people truly want emotional closeness and physical affection with many other humans, but fears get in the way. I saw a picture in the paper recently of two football players in a joyful embrace (not just after a game, but during practice), and I thought about what lengths men will go to in order to get socially approved physical contact and affection from other men.

I have surrounded myself more and more with people who strive for both emotional closeness and physical affection without regard to gender. It is not always an easy path, but it is worth it for that wonderful "aha" of recognition when we find each other, the playful fun we enjoy and the deep spiritual appreciation we share. This to me is living as a spiritual human.

*For more information about Common Unity or Earthspirit, contact Annie at [kalamari@juno.com](mailto:kalamari@juno.com) or at (617) 497-0510.*

#### **Queer Christian Magazine**

*Open Hands* is the only Christian magazine which focuses on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender concerns. It is part of the growing grassroots "welcoming church movement" and is distributed free to about 300 ministries that publicly welcome lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered people. The magazine includes information on biblical study, theology, ethics, and practical ministry issues relating to human sexuality. For more information, contact: Open Hands, P.O. Box 2374, Boulder, CO 80306, 303-666-8322, [ophands@aol.com](mailto:ophands@aol.com).

## **Advertise Your Business or Organization**

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*"Well Wishers" list	\$20	Half Page (7.5" x 5")	\$120
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Quarter Page (3.75" x 5")	\$65	Inside Cover	\$750
		Back Cover	\$1,000

If you own, manage, or work for a bisexual or bi-friendly business, are looking for new subscribers or members for your bi publication or group, or just want to see your name in lights, please buy an ad in the IBC5 program book. Your support will help make the event a success.

Contact Dorian at [dsolot@netspace.org](mailto:dsolot@netspace.org) or (401) 455-3536 for more information. Ads, complete with a check made out to IBC5, can be sent to: International Conference Ads, P.O. Box 603097, Providence, RI 02906.

\*See page 10 for more info.



*Bisexual Survey  
Participants Needed*

Emily Page, a bisexual woman working on her doctorate in clinical psychology at Antioch New England Graduate School, is seeking participation in a survey which will help mental health clinicians improve their services to bisexual clients.

The survey is for anyone who identified as or thought they might be bisexual (regardless of what they call themselves to others) when they were in mental health treatment. They need not have talked about this issue while they were in treatment.

The survey is located on-line at [www.seven.talent.com/bitherapy](http://www.seven.talent.com/bitherapy) and can be done in one or two sessions of 15 to 30 minutes. Your answers will be in anonymous form and the web site has the same security protection that commercial sites do to ensure that no one would be able to trace your computer data.

For a paper or e-mail version of the survey, please contact Emily Page at [bitherapy@aaaa.net](mailto:bitherapy@aaaa.net) or (781) 393-9579.

*Chanukah from page 1*

smaller — which it is. And I need to and will help to preserve it. But when, as a child, I was inundated with invitations to church with friends; and at school they decorated for holidays which were not my holidays, I felt a mixture of sadness and intrigue — where was my holiday? However, I was taught as a teenager to respect Christians and those of other religions. And I was truly curious about what it was that was separating me from them. Especially when it came to dating.

Since most of my teenage friends (read: potential dates) weren't Jewish, and, as I recall, weren't often male, I felt quite hopeless about ever finding "the right man." I think that perhaps as much as I was raised to be heterosexual and Jewish, I lived a bi-spiritual, perhaps multi-spiritual (although not bi-religioned) childhood. I developed a sense of what

others found spiritual through close relationships with neighbors and school friends. As much as we were taught to keep the interactions on a surface level, it is very difficult to tell a young person who to love and not to love. Most of my Jewish friends seemed much more successful at this, surrounding themselves with Jewish friends and activities after school. I,

too, struggled with issues like, why do my school friends get Christmas off and I don't get the Jewish High Holidays off? But I also enjoyed calling them on December 25th and asking, "What did you get for Christmas?" And I was happily herded off to a neighbor's house on several Christmas Eves to help trim the tree. Lots of happiness, good cookies, and smiles. Pretty carols, and shiny lights. What's not to like?

Put bluntly, I didn't care who my friends were — my friends were who I liked, sometimes who I loved. They were people who did fun things and were imaginative, people who were different in some ways and the same in others, people of all religions. And I was never told not to have friends of different religions. I was told not to *date* people of other religions. And I think this message was stifling enough that for the most part, I shied away from dating altogether in high school.

My younger sister openly dated Christian men in high school and college and, in a way, paved the way for me to come out to my parents. She was the one who felt the wrath of doing what was not acceptable; and I was fortunate (or not) to come out much later than she did — she had come out as


someone who chose to interdate. Now she is thinking of dating a Jewish man. I first chose the path to marry a Jewish man, then came out as bisexual; and I am now dating a Catholic woman. Who knew?

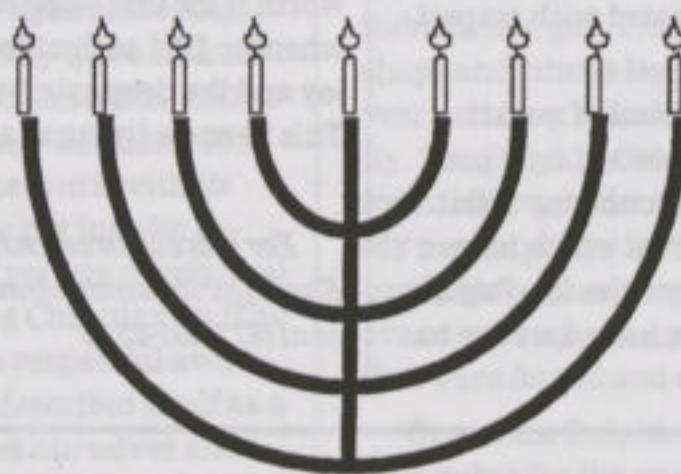
Though I often tend to favor nature in the sexuality debate, for some reason I look to the nurture side for spirituality. And both probably lie somewhere in the middle. For instance, I often find myself bristling at the position of right-wing organizations that somehow the TV show "Ellen" could "cause" someone to be other than heterosexual — as if it is a dreadful pronouncement on one's life. To play devil's advocate with myself, though, Ellen, while not "causing" someone to be gay, lesbian or bisexual, might allow a struggling teen to find herself, which is somewhere in between nature

and nurture, I think. My spirituality was fed by all those around me, not just by my Jewish heritage. And I wonder if I would have come out sooner if my Jewish youth group had encouraged a diversity of sexualities. A Boston temple has recently started a Jewish P-FLAG-type organiza-

tion, which I think is wonderful.

As I try to find a way to come out as a Jewish bisexual woman in a same-sex interfaith relationship, I will try to integrate my bisexuality and multispirituality. Consider the commonalities that exist along a continuum in sexuality, and, yes, religion. When you consider the basics: attraction, love, commitment, household chores, bills, struggles — all those wonderful and necessary aspects of a relationship — whether with a man or a woman, they are always there. If you are a religious or a spiritual person, it is likely that you have an interest in a higher power. The name or the gender or the size or the look may be different; but we are all looking for some kind of reassurance, some kind of peace from our spiritual beliefs, and perhaps for a sense of family.

As I look at the history of my sexuality, I feel fulfilled. As I have searched for the relationship I now have, I have been fulfilled to some extent by all names and genders and sizes and looks. To take this one step further, now my strength comes from a wonderful woman, both in my relationship and in my religion. 





# Choosing My Self

By [REDACTED]

I was born, raised, and baptized a nice Lutheran girl. My grandparents and parents were all baptized, confirmed and married in the same small Danish Lutheran Church where they brought me to be christened. I was an eager confirmation student, conscientiously memorizing my catechism, and an acolyte on Sunday mornings. In college, I traveled to the Luther sites in Germany with my Luther League. On this trip, I lost my virginity to our German bus driver. But, I lost my *innocence* when I finally understood what the church would ask of me in order to give its blessings as one of its ministers.

It was while I lived in my Lutheran dorm at my Lutheran seminary that I fell in love with a Lutheran woman from down the hall. We were very happily in love and also lived in fear that the wrong people would discover that rather than chasing nice Lutheran men we wanted each other. I alternated between ecstasy at finding someone to love and fear and depression at understanding what the Lutheran Church taught about loves such as mine.

I began to reach out to find others like me, like us. They were, rather *we* were everywhere: in Lutheran churches and Methodist and UCC and Catholic and non-denominational churches. Women and men who felt both the call of God and the draw to others of their own gender.

I heard stories of heroes and stories of heartbreak. Stories about the contortions of people forced to hide their love, to hide their lives, to live a lie while exhorting their congregations to walk in the light. Stories of life-long partners delegated to the status of "roommates who share expenses." Of witch hunts to root out the homosexuals. Of women and men caught in a system that rewarded deceit, and punished those who told the truth. I tried to project myself into these stories. I tried to imagine, to re-imagine my life.

I had for years felt my call, wanted nothing more than to be a pastor. So, I suffered. I once sat in my room with the drapes drawn for three days as I contemplated the choices I must make. My seminary advisor was supportive, but couldn't help. He suggested I keep quiet, lie low, just get through because "the church needs people like you." Yes, it did — and it does — but the question became, did I need such a church?

It was a choice between a life with integrity or shutting off my true self so very deeply that I would die. In the end, there I stood. I could not do other than choose my self.

I left with my degree and my pride because I would not leave empty-handed. I left my seminary, my congregation, and my denomination. I carried with me the deep nagging grief of being asked to make an unacceptable choice and lived with the consequence of having made it.

For years, I couldn't step into a Lutheran Church without a stabbing pain. A portion of my heart had been cut out and would never grow back. The years passed. I healed. I went back to school for a degree with which I could get a job. I'm happy, successful.

Yet, at times I cry at night with an ache for the Lutherans, and wonder what life would be like now if I had somehow been able to stay and be Lutheran *and* be all that I am. ▽

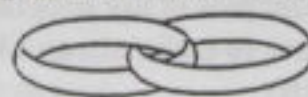


## Danish Church Approves Same-Gender Marriages

The Associated Press recently reported that on October 28, 1997 the Bishops of the Danish Lutheran Church unanimously approved same sex marriages. The Bishops ruling stated that same sex couples could have their marriages sealed as a part of "regular church services" but not in "separate marriage ceremonies." The Lutheran clergy have been deeply divided over this issue since 1989, when Denmark became the first country to legalize civil marriages for same sex couples.



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*Rhode Island Task  
Force Holds Youth  
Forum*

Monday, January 12, 1998, the Rhode Island Task Force on Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth is sponsoring its second Forum on the status of LGBT students in Rhode Island schools. The Forum will be held at List Auditorium at Brown University and will include students and faculty sharing their experiences and strategies for dealing with homophobia in the school systems. For more information call Berto or Mark at Youth Pride at 401-421-5626.



## Recovery Resources:

### Boston Area Hotlines:

Alcoholics Anonymous  
617-426-9444

Mon-Fri, 9:00 a.m.-  
9:00 p.m., Sat-Sun,  
Noon-9:00 p.m.

### Gay Al-Anon

617-843-5300  
10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.  
live; 3:00-10:00 p.m.  
answering service

### Lesbian Al-Anon

617-354-8807  
Meets at the Cam-  
bridge Women's  
Center

### Narcotics Anonymous

617-884-7709

\*\*\*\*\*

## Join the Ranks of the "Well Wishers"

Organizers of the 5th International Bisexual Conference (IBC5) will be publishing a list of "Well Wishers" in the IBC5 Program Book and they'd like to see your name on it. See page 7 for details on how you can support this important event in this way.

## A Spiritual Recovery

by Andrea\*

My spirituality is a direct result of the work I've done in 12-step programs. Prior to entering recovery, I had been raised Jewish and had participated in various feminist rituals. Obtaining spirituality and reliance on a power greater than myself has had a profound impact on my sexuality, in that I now accept that I am a bisexual woman.

Prior to entering 12-step rooms, I declared to myself and my community my lesbianism. The catch was that I was living with a man in a committed partnership who I passed off as my "housemate." No one, including my family or close personal friends, knew the true nature of our relationship, which lasted nine years. You might think this was amazing or crazy, but this was how deep my denial was. After sharing this information with my sponsor (an experienced member from my program who guided me through stepwork), she encouraged me to get honest about this. I began sharing the truth with people in my groups and eventually was able to identify as bisexual. Later, I began telling my friends. Despite the fear of criticism and abandonment, my trust in a higher power allowed me to go forward.

As I shared this excruciating secret, most of my friends were accepting. I did encounter a major problem with a close colleague and lesbian separatist friend. It was my spirituality coupled with my commitment to myself and our friendship that gave me tools to discuss, take space and eventually overcome our challenge.

My commitment to spirit required I be rigorously honest and I was shown that this male partner was not my life mate. I eventually moved on and have currently been single for two years. There are days I have been tempted to go back to calling myself a lesbian; however, my commitment to all the principles of my program allow me one day at a time to maintain and be proud of my bisexual identity.

This new found freedom has provided me with a desire to reestablish my Jewishness. I recently participated in a lesbian and bi women's celebration of the holy days. These rituals, as well as daily prayer and meditation, give me new rewarding ways to feel spirit and joy. I also find I am more present, especially when outside in nature. Today I feel a rich balance in all areas of my life which includes self-acceptance, a dedication to strong personal and political beliefs, and positive spiritual and emotional health. ▽

*\*In keeping with the 12-step tradition of anonymity, I give only my first name.*



## Book Review:

### *Walking to Mercury*

by Starhawk, Bantam Books, 1997

Reviewed by Lynn Rosenbaum

I was immediately drawn into the captivating storytelling and spiritual wisdom of *Walking to Mercury*. This novel is Starhawk's second work of fiction, a "prequel" to *The Fifth Sacred Thing* (which I also highly recommend.)

The central character, Maya, is a bisexual priestess, drawing her power from the natural elements around her (much like Starhawk herself). Maya embarks on a long and arduous journey through the mountains of Nepal, while traveling a parallel journey through her own personal history. Maya must reconcile many experiences from her past, including the death of her mother, her anti-war activism and her relationships with a man, Rio, and a woman, Johanna. The many strands of her life are skillfully and suspensefully woven together through memories, letters, and journal entries from the 1960s to the present.

Maya's relationships with Rio and Johanna are each unique, but with both lovers, she creates deep and powerful connections. While Maya's experiences with Rio are often passionate and tumultuous, Maya describes her relationship with Johanna as "an open, bisexual, long-running affair, conducted one night at a time." In both of these love affairs, Maya struggles with how to remain true to her heart in the face of complicated realities.

Whether dealing with relationships or with her passionate quest for peace and respect for the earth, Maya always strives for integrity. Even when her ideals clash with those around her, or her own doubts and ambivalence creep in, she never loses hold of her convictions. From adolescence until her fortieth year, Maya carves her own path toward dignity and truth. Her journey is a truly inspiring tale. ▽

\*\*\*\*\*

Walking to Mercury and over 500 other books with bisexual themes, plotlines or authors are available on-line through the Bisexual Resource Center's world-wide web site at <http://www.norn.org/pub/other-orgs/brc/bookstore>. Sales from the bookstore help support education projects of the BRC.

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## CALENDAR *continued from page 12*

January 14 ♦ Wednesday

Bisexual Resource Center Board Meeting. 7-9 p.m. at the bi office.

January 15 ♦ Thursday

Biversity Boston Movie Night. 7-9:30 p.m. at Jay and Heidi's in Jamaica Plain. We'll select something that's gotten a "thumbs up" in Wayne Bryant's new book *Bisexual Characters in Film*. Info and directions: js@aq.org or (617) 524-6984.

January 17 ♦ Saturday

Biversity Brunch. 11:30 a.m. at Doyle's, 3484 Washington St. in Jamaica Plain. Nearest T stop is Forest Hills stops on the Orange Line.

January 20 ♦ Tuesday

Coming Out as Bisexual. 7-9 p.m. (see December 3rd)

Bi Women's Rap. 7:30 p.m. (see December 2nd)

January 22 ♦ Thursday

25th Anniversary Celebration for Roe v. Wade, the 1973 landmark Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion. Organized by the Massachusetts National Abortion Rights Action League. 5-7 p.m. at the State House in Boston. Free admission. Info: Mara at (617) 556-8800.

### Please Join Us!

**Saturday, January 24**

*The Bisexual Resource Center and the Multicultural AIDS Coalition are hosting a fabulous brunch together and you're invited.*

**11 a.m. - 2 p.m.**

Meet our friends at the MAC! Learn about educating yourself and others about HIV/AIDS and safer sex! Tasty potluck morsels are appreciated (a microwave and two burners are available for reheating). 11 a.m.-2 p.m. at the Multicultural AIDS Coalition, 801B Tremont Street, Boston, two blocks south of Mass. Ave. Nearest T stop is Mass. Ave. on the Orange Line. Or you can join a group leaving from the Bi Office at 10:30 a.m.

January 25 ♦ Sunday

Biversity Brunch. 1 p.m. If you like Cuban food, you'll love Mucho Gusto. Join us for excellent food in a bi-friendly atmosphere. 1174 Boylston St., (near Mass. Ave) Boston. Nearest T stop is Hynes Convention Center/ICA on the Green Line.

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\* Renewal/subscription rate for this offer is \$20 minimum/\$30 suggested. See accompanying flyer for more info.

January 27 ♦ Tuesday

BBWN Dinner. 6 p.m. Join the newsletter mailing crew at Bertucci's, 49 Stanhope St., Boston. After dinner, we'll head next door to the Bi Office for the *BiWomen* mailing.

*BiWomen* mailing, 7-9 p.m. at the Bi Office. We couldn't get this newsletter out without 'ya. With lots of help the work is quick and we can adjourn to Hazel's Cafe' for scrumptious desserts!

January 31 ♦ Saturday

Biversity Bowling Day. Let's Go Bowling! Big balls, little balls - Take your pick. Meet at 2 p.m. at Lanes and Games, Route 2 in Arlington near the Alewife T stop on the Red Line.

Have you gotten involved with organizing the 5th International Bisexual Conference yet? Don't put it off any longer. Call or email Wayne today at (508) 699-6612 or byrant@tdint.com to volunteer.

### BiWomen Subscription Form

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02140**

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## The "Bi Office"

is the Bisexual Resource Center, located at 29-33 Stanhope Street, behind Club Cafe' and right next door to Bertucci's. For info call (617) 424-9595.

## Ongoing Events

### 1st & 3rd Tuesdays:

**Bi Women's Rap.** 7:30 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St, Cambridge. For info and discussion topics call (617) 354-8807.

### Wednesdays:

**Gendertalk.** 8:30-9:30 p.m. on WMBR 88.1 FM. Deals with transgender and queer issues.

### 2nd Thursdays:

**Single Jewish Lesbian and Bisexual Women's Group.** 6:30-8 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant Street. Info: (617) 499-9612

**Bi Married Women's Support Group.** 7-9 p.m. at the Bi Office. For bi women who are married to or in a relationship with a man. Call Debbie at (617) 731-9060 for info.

### 3rd Thursdays:

**GLBisexual Speakers Bureau Meeting.** 8 p.m., at the Boston Living Center, 29-33 Stanhope Street, Boston (in the same building as the Bi office). Wheelchair accessible. General meeting at 6:45 p.m. with the theme program starting at 8 p.m. Info: (617) 354-0133.

# CALENDAR

## December 2 ♦ Tuesday

**Bi Women's Rap.** 7:30-9 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St, Cambridge. Info: (617) 354-8807. Theme: Fantasy Night

## December 3 ♦ Wednesday

**Coming Out as Bisexual.** An informal support group for people who think they may be bisexual or attracted to more than one gender. 7-9 p.m. at the Bi Office. A small donation is requested to help pay for the space. Sponsored by the Bisexual Resource Center. Info: (617) 424-9595.

## December 7 ♦ Sunday

**Bi Space.** 7-9 p.m. at the Bi Office, 29 Stanhope St., Boston. A friendly discussion space to meet other bisexuals and talk about bisexual issues. The first hour's topic "Bi Role Models." is a \$2 donation is requested to help pay for rental of the space.

## December 10 ♦ Wednesday

**Bisexual Resource Center Annual Meeting.** 7-9 p.m. We'll be electing new board members and discussing the organization's educational projects and finances. The BRC is here to serve and educate about *your* community, so if you want to find out what it's been up to and it's upcoming plans, please join us. All bi and bi-friendly people are welcome to attend.

## December 13 ♦ Saturday

**BBWN House Party,** 8 p.m. at Ananda and Amy's in Somerville near Davis Square. Please join us for music and dancing, great food, hot drinks, cool women, and their friends. Come celebrate the holiday season, the end of 1997, and just to have a rousing good time. For info and directions call (617) 776-1008.

## December 16 ♦ Tuesday

**Coming Out as Bisexual.** 7-9 p.m. (see December 3rd)

**Bi Women's Rap Group.** 7:30-9p.m. (see December 2nd) Topic: Families

## December 17 ♦ Wednesday

**BBWN Planning Meeting.** 7-9 p.m. at the Bi Office. Come help plan and organize our party to coincide with the 5th International Bi Conference and think up some other great ideas. Free munchies! We want to see you there.

## December 18 ♦ Thursday

**Biversity Video Night and Spare Change Party.** 7-9 p.m., at Jay and Heidi's in Jamaica Plain. We'll watch a movie and pool our spare change to raise money for the IBC5 travel fund, which helps defer travel costs for foreign conferees. This is the perfect chance to get rid of that pile of pennies that's threatening to collapse the top of your dresser! Info and directions: js@aq.org or (617) 524-6984.

## December 20 ♦ Saturday

**Biversity Brunch.** 11:30 a.m. Enjoy good conversation and hearty Mexican taqueria food at Picante, 735 Mass. Ave. in Central Square, Cambridge. Nearest T stop is Central on the Red Line.

## December 28 ♦ Sunday

**Biversity Brunch.** 1:00 p.m. Japanese, Korean, Chinese, Vietnamese, Thai and more at Ma Soba. Corner of Dunster and Mt. Auburn Streets in Harvard Square, Cambridge. Nearest T stop is Harvard on the Red Line.

## December 31 ♦ Wednesday

**Biversity New Year's Eve Dinner/First Night.**

Meet at 7 p.m. at Buddha's Delight in Boston's Chinatown (between Harrison and Washington Sts.) for a delectable Asian dinner. Then we'll head off to enjoy some First Night entertainment in the area.



## January 2 ♦ Friday

**BiWomen Submissions Deadline.** This issue's topic is Fiction. Show us your short stories, interview a bi author, or review your favorite hot, bi novel. Send articles (on any topic), calendar entries, letters, black-and-white art, news and views to: BiWomen, P.O. Box 639, Cambridge, MA 02140 or e-mail text only (not images) to *both* lindab@shore.net and eruthstr@mail.lesley.edu.

## January 4 ♦ Sunday

**Bi Space.** 7-9 p.m. The first hour's topic is "Bis and Families." (see December 7th)

## January 6 ♦ Tuesday

**Bi Women's Rap.** 7:30-9p.m. (see December 2nd)

## January 7 ♦ Wednesday

**Coming Out as Bisexual.** 7-9 p.m. (see December 3rd)

## January 11 ♦ Sunday

**BBWN Potluck Brunch** at noon. Join us at Lucy's in Belmont to ring in the New Year with a room full of warm, wonderful women. Accessible by bus routes 74 and 75. Call for directions at (617) 484-5964. All women welcome.

## January 14 ♦ Wednesday

**BBWN Introductory Meeting.** A safe space for women to connect with the bisexual community. 7:30 p.m.- 9 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., Cambridge. Info: (617) 354-8807.

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